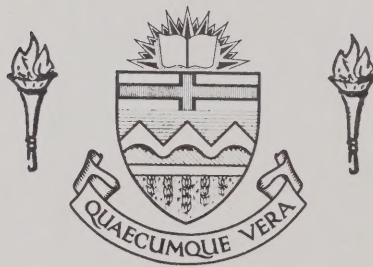


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THE HISTORY OF THE FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY
OF EDMONTON 1795 - 1935

by



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ABSTRACT

The presence of French-speaking people in the Edmonton area dates as far back as 1795 when French-Canadian voyageurs were employed by the North West Company in the fur trade. Before the amalgamation of the North West Company with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 the latter concern also began to employ some French-Canadians around Fort Edmonton. Both companies also employed the French-speaking Métis who had resulted from French-Indian marriages. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century these French elements were joined by French-speaking Catholic missionaries who came to Christianize the fur traders, Métis, and Indians and in the process ensured the preservation of the French language and identity.

After 1870 when Edmonton settlement proper began to appear a new Catholic church, Saint Joachim's, was built outside the fort and it became the religious and social focal point for a slowly increasing French-speaking population, many of whom came from Quebec. Following the Rebellion of 1885 a new and larger church was built and a school opened, but it was soon obvious that the French-speaking proportion of the population was decreasing because of the influx of other nationalities. As a result a program of organized French-speaking colonization was initiated by the clergy and although it was successful in bringing many new French-

speaking people to the Edmonton area their proportion in the total population continued to decrease. Because of this decreasing proportion new measures to promote a continuing French identity were needed and this resulted in the creation of a local Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society, the publication of a French language newspaper, and participation in local and territorial politics. In the pursuit of these measures there was a tendency for an elite drawn from the clergy and the leading French-speaking politicians and business and professional men to emerge and lead the rest of the community.

After 1905 the main feature of Edmonton's French-speaking community was the elite's attempt through involvement in all aspects of community life, religious, social, economic, political and educational, to retain a French identity and French rights while at the same time maintaining the best possible relations with the rest of the population. Between 1905 and 1914 these attempts were highly successful and this period marked the apogee of the community's history. However, with the outbreak of World War I and the ensuing conscription crisis conditions began to deteriorate. In the years between 1918 and 1935 there was a gradual decline in the community's identity and influence owing to changes within its social structure, a drastic reduction in the proportion of French-speaking clergy, political dissensions, and a variety of other factors. That the community's identity did not disappear altogether was largely due to the continued determination of the elite to maintain French

rights and to their influence in the city as a whole. After 1935 the pattern set in the preceding period was more or less perpetuated as although the French-speaking community never returned to the strong, closely-knit entity it had once been the continued influence and hard work of the elite helped ensure the retention of the French identity and French rights.

Preface

Although much valuable work has been done studying all the various aspects of the French experience in Quebec, relatively little has been done on the French experience in the lands which after 1870 composed the North West Territories. This study will attempt to examine this experience through the medium of a particular French-speaking community--that of Edmonton. It is not suggested that Edmonton's French-speaking community was an entirely typical one but it was a very important one and did in many respects express characteristics found in all French-speaking communities in this area. To facilitate the study an attempt has been made to examine the community in three rather broad areas. First of all, to examine the contribution of the community as a whole and some of its more noteworthy individuals in particular in the development of Edmonton from a fur post, to a town, and finally to a thriving city. Secondly, to examine the social life of the community and the types of social structures which emerged within it. Of particular concern here will be the elite or that segment of the community which tended to act as the religious, social, economic, and political leaders of the rest of the population. Included will be an examination of the role of this elite as the protectors of the French identity in Edmonton

and Alberta on one hand and their role in bridging the gap between French and English on the other. Thirdly, to examine the attitudes of the community on various questions ranging from politics to education and colonization and to some extent to compare these to attitudes in Quebec.

Sincerest thanks is expressed to Dr. L. G. Thomas who suggested the topic and acted as supervisor of the thesis; to the late Father Emile Tardif, O.M.I., whose help was invaluable in finding material at the Oblate Archives of Edmonton and who acted as a proofreader; to the staff of the Legislative Library in Edmonton who also aided in finding material; to Dr. Roger Motut who allowed me to use his valuable copies of L'Ouest Canadien; and to all the various individuals who so kindly provided interviews.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Any history of the part played by French-speaking people in the foundation and development of Edmonton¹ must necessarily first examine the historical reasons for the French presence in the area. The historical background of the French-speaking community, as it is for the city of Edmonton itself, is the story of the fur trading post of Fort Edmonton, a post in whose history the French-Canadians and their French-speaking Métis offspring played a major role. These in turn were joined by French-speaking missionary priests who towards the middle of the nineteenth century came to the banks of the North Saskatchewan in an attempt to bring the word of God to the Indians, Métis and fur traders. Together these three elements, the French-Canadians employed in the fur trade, the Métis and the missionaries, were the predecessors of the French-speaking community which was to emerge in the years after 1877.

It was the fur trade which was the reason for the white man's penetration into the lands of the North

¹Edmonton here refers to the existence of settlement outside of Fort Edmonton, i.e. hamlet, town, and city respectively.

Saskatchewan valley hitherto inhabited only by roving bands of Crees and Blackfeet. At the time of the establishment of the first Fort Edmonton in 1795 the area was by the terms of the Hudson's Bay Company Charter of 1670 the sole preserve of that company, including a monopoly of the fur trade. During the latter part of the eighteenth century many independent Montreal fur traders following the footsteps of La Vérendrye had however chosen to ignore the monopoly and had actively opposed and outstripped the Hudson's Bay Company in the trade of the North West country. In 1779 nine distinct parties of these independent traders ended many years of disorderly competition amongst themselves when they joined together to begin the formation of the North West Company.² With the creation of this company on a well-organized basis the opening of the North Saskatchewan valley became the story of active and often violent competition between the two rival concerns, especially after the absorption in 1804 by the North West Company of a smaller competitor, the XY Company.³

The first post built on the North Saskatchewan in what is now Alberta was Fort George, erected in 1792 by the North West Company near modern day Elk Point. Thereafter competition for furs forced both companies to move up the

²Arthur S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West To 1870-71 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., n.d.), p. 327.

³Ibid., p. 509.

river and in 1795 Angus Shaw of the North West Company had Fort Augustus built about a mile and a half above the point where the North Saskatchewan is joined by the Sturgeon River. Immediately behind the North West Company came William Tomison, a thirty-five year veteran of the Hudson's Bay Company, who on October 13, 1795 began the construction of the first Fort Edmonton within a musket shot of Shaw's Fort Augustus.⁴ Henceforth every time one company saw fit to move its post the other immediately followed suit. In 1802 both moved up to the present site of the Edmonton power house, in 1810 to White Earth near Smoky Lake, and finally in 1812 back to the vicinity of the power house. Here they remained until 1820 when they moved further up the hill immediately below the present location of the Legislative Building.⁵

Although once firmly established both the Canadian and English companies attempted to employ similar methods in the pursuit of the fur trade, there was a great difference in their employees. Even though in 1804 only two of the forty bourgeois of the North West Company, Chaboillez and Rocheblave, were French-Canadians, it was the policy of the Company to employ as its servants French-Canadians

⁴Alice M. Johnson, ed., Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence 1795-1802, Publications of The Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol. XXVI (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1967), p. 14.

⁵George Heath MacDonald, Fort Augustus-Edmonton (Edmonton: The Douglas Printing Co. Ltd., 1954), pp. 28-32.

recruited in Montreal. The preference for French-Canadians partly resulted from the ability, hardiness, bravery, and perseverance of the voyageurs in the long and hazardous canoe trips of the fur brigade into the up-country with trading supplies and back to Montreal with the fur packs. But in addition the French-Canadians were also a very valuable consideration in the keen competition for the Indians' patronage in the fur trade. Because of their great faculty for learning Indian languages, their ability as hunters and guides, and their amenability to marriage with Indian women they often endeared themselves to various Indian tribes.⁶ With reference to these servant-Indian marriages it was in fact a company policy to promote them and try to make commercial capital out of them.⁷ On the other hand, it was from the outset the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company to draw its personnel from England, Scotland, and above all the Orkney Islands. These equally hardy men, who were adept at handling the flat-bottomed York boats used in the brigades of the English company, also contracted some marriages with Indian women. However, during the early years of competition the Hudson's Bay Company suffered from shortages

⁶L'Abbé G. Dugas, L'Ouest Canadien (Montreal: Cadieux and Derome, 1896), pp. 199-200; Rev. A. G. Morice, O.M.I., The History Of The Catholic Church In Western Canada (Toronto: The Musson Book Company Ltd., 1910), pp. 58-59.

⁷Morton, p. 350.

of manpower⁸ and consequently marriages between its employees and Indian women were not as numerous as among North West Company employees.

The degree to which the North West Company utilized French-Canadian servants at Fort Augustus is made obvious by a review of some of the men at the post in 1804. At this time there were three French-Canadian clerks, Nicholas Montour, Jacques Raphael, and Jules-Maurice Quesnel, who was later to become a legislative councillor in Montreal; two guides, Louis Durand and Antoine Clement, who two years later was with David Thompson at Rocky Mountain House; and ten interpreters, X. Berger, Louis Blondeau, Francois Deneau, Pierre Denommé, Francois Deschamps, Pierre Jérôme, Laliberté, Jean-Baptiste Letendre, Auguste Lionnais, and Joseph Primeau.⁹ By way of comparison, in 1795 when Tomison built the first Fort Edmonton there appears to have been a steady complement of about seventeen men all of whom were Orcadians. This is not surprising since of the 132 men sent inland from York Factory by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1795-96, 119 were from the Orkney Islands.¹⁰

⁸Richard Glover, Introduction to Cumberland and Hudson House Journals 1775-82, Publications of The Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol. XIV (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1951), pp. lxxvi-lxxxii.

⁹Rev. A. G. Morice, O.M.I., Dictionnaire Historique des Canadiens et des Métis français de l'Ouest (Kamloops: Chez l'Auteur, 1908), pp. 203, 244, 242, 107, 69, 23, 32, 84, 86, 134, 151, 186, 188, 234.

¹⁰Johnson, Introduction pp. xxxi-ii.

In the years after 1804, when the bitterest rivalry between the two companies began, it became increasingly more common for the Hudson's Bay Company also to employ some French-Canadian servants. This was perhaps as a result of continued shortages of Orkneymen¹¹ or because of a realization of the value of the French-Canadians in the competition for the trade. Whatever the reasons, before the union of the two companies in 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company had recruited several of them from among les "hommes libres", men whose contracts with the North West Company had expired and who were in the service of no particular concern.

Among the most famous of the French-Canadian employees of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Edmonton area during these years was Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière whose wife Marie-Anne Gaboury was the first white woman in the North West. In the year 1807 Lagimodière, one of the Company's most trusted guides, returned from the Red River region to Maskinongé, Quebec and married Marie-Anne, the daughter of Charles Gaboury. Immediately after the wedding the couple departed for the West and after a difficult journey they reached Pembina. Here they became the parents of a daughter, Reine, the first white child born in the North West. In 1808 the couple joined a brigade going up the Saskatchewan and after another arduous voyage arrived at Edmonton where they were to remain for four years. Marie-Anne lived at the fort in

¹¹Glover, pp. lxxv-vi.

the winter during their stay but in the summer she accompanied her husband and the other French-Canadians in the service of the Company on the buffalo hunt. It was on the way back to the fort from one of these hunting trips that she gave birth to her second child, named Laprairie in honor of the location.¹² Later on the Lagimodière's returned to live at the Red River Settlement and it was here that Marie-Anne gave birth to a daughter named Julie, the future mother of Louis Riel.¹³

Another source of French-speaking personnel for the Hudson's Bay Company, as indeed it was also for the North West Company, was from among the Métis who became fairly common in the Edmonton area after the turn of the century. The first recorded Métis family was that of François Beaulieu, the product of the union in 1771 between François Beaulieu senior, a French-Canadian voyageur who accompanied Alexander Mackenzie on his journey to the Pacific in 1793, and a Montagnais mother. Beaulieu junior, who is known as "le doyen des métis français au nord-ouest", lived in the area around Lesser Slave Lake and appears again and again in the historical annals of that region. In 1829 Sir John Franklin had recourse to him to aid in picking the best route for his explorations, and in 1848 he was baptized by

¹²Morice, Dictionnaire, pp. 116-17; La Survivance 12 avril, 1933.

¹³J. G. MacGregor, Edmonton, a history (Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig Publishers, 1967) p. 31.

Bishop A. Taché at the age of seventy-six.¹⁴ Although he was among the first of the Métis nation, Beaulieu was soon followed by numerous others as the unions between French-Canadians and the Indian women, particularly the Crees, proliferated. Servants could take Indian wives with the permission of the bourgeois and these wives and their children were supported at the expense of the post. This was allowed because by virtue of the ties the Métis offspring had with the various Indian tribes as well as their facility in speaking the Indian tongues they became equally if not more valuable to the trade than their French-Canadian fathers. The predominance of these French-speaking Métis and their French-Canadian fathers in the service of the fur companies during this period is witnessed by the fact that French was the universally accepted language of the trade until the middle of the nineteenth century. As such it was in general the language in use around Forts Edmonton and Augustus.¹⁵

The era of bitter and violent rivalry between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company was finally ended in the union of the two companies in 1821 when the latter absorbed the former. In the Saskatchewan district the North West Company posts commonly gave way to the

¹⁴ Morice, Dictionnaire, pp. 15-16; Morice, Catholic Church, p. 54.

¹⁵ Morton, p. 349; MacDonald, p. 126; Morice, Catholic Church, p. 59.

Hudson's Bay Company posts and thus Fort Augustus gave way to Fort Edmonton or Edmonton House.¹⁶ At the same time many of the employees of the North West Company, French-Canadians and Métis included, became part of the much enlarged staff of the Hudson's Bay Company post. The make-up of this staff gradually began to change as in the years following the union the number of Métis began to increase as they replaced the French-Canadian voyageurs. Whereas previously it had been the policy of the North West Company to recruit the men for the brigade at Montreal, after the union it became common for the Métis of Red River to be recruited in their place.¹⁷ Edmonton House's population of Métis increased accordingly and in 1833 the post had to assume the responsibility for the support of eighteen Métis men, twenty-eight women, and seventy-one children.¹⁸

As well as being employed as boatmen in the brigade the increasing Métis population fulfilled numerous other functions both at Edmonton House and in its environs. The Métis' specialty was as interpreters in the dealings of the post with the Indians, receiving them when they came to trade and intervening in the actual trading in an attempt to moderate their demands. In addition they were particularly valuable at the Edmonton post because it was a freight

¹⁶Morton, p. 630.

¹⁷Marcel Giraud, Le Métis Canadien (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1945), p. 971.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 1034-35.

hauling base for the supply of Fort Assiniboine and much of the Athabaska country. They were employed as teamsters for the pack horses when the supplies were taken out and were trusted with the protection from marauding Indian bands of the herds of horses kept in the Edmonton area. Still others were employed as "fort hunters", hunting buffalo or other big game in order that the post would have sufficient food supplies and so that pemmican could be made to provision the brigades going on to the Pacific coast or the Mackenzie River Basin.¹⁹

Compared to the period of bitterness and violence prior to 1821 the succeeding years were ones of relative calm and routine around Edmonton House. The number of servants at the post was gradually reduced in accordance with company policy. In 1845-46 Chief Factor John Rowand had to support only about eighty French-Canadians and Métis as compared to the 117 Métis alone the post supported in 1833.²⁰ This reduction, however, affected all ranks at the fort and the French-speaking predominance remained intact. Finally in 1838 the routine of the life at the post was broken by the appearance of what was to compose in the forthcoming years an entirely new element of the French-speaking presence in the North West--French-speaking Catholic missionaries. The first two missionaries to be seen at

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 1002-11.

²⁰ Morice, Catholic Church, p. 165.

Edmonton House were the Reverend Fathers Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers who were on their way to open missions in the Fort Vancouver area. They left Saint Boniface on July 10, 1838 as part of a brigade under the command of John Rowand and reached Edmonton on September 6. During their four day stay the two priests blessed and erected a cross on the hill dominating the fort, provided religious instruction, and performed numerous baptisms and marriages mostly among the French-Canadians and Métis.²¹

Meanwhile at Saint Boniface Monseigneur J. N. Provencher, who in 1822 had been created a bishop auxiliary to the Bishop of Quebec and was to become in 1844 the first Bishop of the newly created Diocese of Saint Boniface, was attempting to deal with the problem of insufficient manpower to open new missions in the West. This problem was not to be even partially solved until 1845 when a French religious order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was procured to aid the few scattered secular priests already on the prairies.²² In the meantime the visit of Blanchet and Demers to the Edmonton area had awakened the religious interest of some of the French-Canadians and Métis. After the arrival of the Wesleyan missionary R. T. Rundle at Fort

²¹Father Albert Lacombe, O.M.I., "Memoirs of Father Albert Lacombe, O.M.I.," pp. 24-25 (available at archives of the Oblate Fathers, 9916 - 110 St., Edmonton).

²²Mgr. Alexander Taché, Vingt Années De Missions Dans Le Nord-Ouest De L'Amerique (Montreal: Eusebe Senecal, 1866), pp. 2-4.

Edmonton in 1840 a Métis from the area named Piché went to Red River to plead with Bishop Provencher to send a priest among them. Fearing the loss of the district to Protestantism, Provencher complied with the request, and on June 19, 1842 the Reverend Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault arrived at Edmonton.²³ Thibault was born December 14, 1810 at Point Levis, Quebec and studied at the Seminary of Quebec. Immediately upon graduation in 1833 he went to Red River where he was ordained on September 8, 1833, thereafter serving for several years at Saint Boniface.²⁴ During his first summer on the Saskatchewan he visited Forts Carleton, Pitt, and Ellice as well as Edmonton and performed 353 baptisms and 18 marriages. In the record of these baptisms and marriages which Father Thibault left it is the names of French-Canadians and Métis of French origin which predominate, among the most common being those of Belanger, Boucher, Bruneau, Dumont, Lussier, Patenaude, Villeneuve, and Vallée.²⁵

When Thibault returned to Saint Boniface in November he brought with him a petition to the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company signed by numerous Métis and Indians requesting that a priest be permitted to reside amongst

²³Lacombe, pp. 29-30.

²⁴Ibid., p. 28.

²⁵"Registre des Baptêmes et Mariages faits dans les Missions des Forts des Prairies 1842-1850" (available at the archives of the Oblate Fathers, 9916 - 110 St., Edmonton).

them.²⁶ After his return to Fort Edmonton in the spring of 1843 he decided upon a site for a permanent mission at Devil's Lake about fifty miles to the west of the fort, naming the mission Lac Sainte Anne. It soon attracted a fairly substantial Métis population and in 1844 Thibault was joined there by Reverend Father Joseph Bourassa who had but a short time before been recruited in Quebec. As for Edmonton House there was no permanent mission established at this time although both Fathers Thibault and Bourassa frequently visited it from their base at Lac Sainte Anne.

By 1852 Father Thibault had returned to Saint Boniface worn out by missionary efforts which included the performance of 1,660 baptisms and 135 marriages in the period between 1842 and 1850.²⁷ Father Bourassa followed him in 1853, and Bishop Alexander Taché, O.M.I., appointed coadjutor with Bishop Provencher on June 14, 1850, was forced to find an immediate replacement for the mission. The replacement was found in the person of Reverend Father Albert Lacombe whose name was to become synonymous with the missions of the Saskatchewan district for the next half century. Lacombe was born February 28, 1827 at Saint Sulpice, Quebec the eldest of the family of six of Albert Lacombe and Agathe Duhamel. In 1840 he entered L'Assomption College for seven years with the expenses paid by Father

²⁶Lacombe, p. 32.

²⁷"Registre des Baptêmes et Mariages".

Viau, the curé of his parish, and then continued his studies at the Bishop's Palace in Montreal. During 1848 a missionary from Red River, Father George A. Belcourt, had come to Montreal to ask for help in the western missions and after ordination at Saint Hyacinthe on June 13, 1848 Lacombe went to Pembina to join him. Here he remained for two years, mainly engaged in accompanying the Métis on their buffalo hunts to the plains, but in October, 1851 he returned to Montreal with the intention of joining the Oblate order. But because of the severe shortage of missionaries in the West Lacombe's services were needed elsewhere and Bishop Provencher persuaded him to postpone his novitiate in order to go and take over the missions of the Edmonton area. He departed on July 12 from Red River and arrived at Edmonton on September 19, 1852 where he was greeted by Chief Factor Rowand and his family.²⁸ After a short visit to Lac Sainte Anne he returned to Edmonton House where he spent the winter of 1852-53 attempting to learn the Cree language and ministering to the Catholics from a house provided by Rowand, himself a Catholic. In his Memoirs Father Lacombe described the population of the fort during his first winter there as "made up of a few French-Canadians married to Métis or Indian women, a few Métis families, and a small number of Scotchmen and Englishmen, all employees of the Company".²⁹

²⁸Lacombe, pp. 61-64, 80-95.

²⁹Ibid., p. 106.

With the coming of spring, Lacombe left Edmonton House and repaired to the mission of Lac Sainte Anne which for the next few years was to be the base of his activities. In 1853 he was joined by Reverend Father René Rémas, O.M.I., under whose guidance he completed his novitiate for the Oblates, pronouncing his final vows in the chapel at Lac Sainte Anne on September 28, 1856.³⁰ Previous to this, however, Father Lacombe accompanied Bishop Taché of Saint Boniface on his first visit to Fort Edmonton. On March 23, 1854 the two together decided upon the name of Saint Joachim for the mission at the fort.³¹ Although Chief Factor Rowand had provided Father Lacombe with a small residence within the confines of the stockade there was as yet neither a chapel nor a church. This problem was finally remedied by Rowand's successor, J. W. Christie, who in the course of the year 1859 had a small church constructed for the use of the missionaries. The church was probably built because of the large number of Catholics employed at the post but in later years some of the clergy maintained that the commercial interests of the Company had also been at stake. Bishop Vital Grandin, O.M.I., claimed in 1876 that Christie had realized that Father Lacombe and his fellow

³⁰Raymond A. Maclean, "The History of The Roman Catholic Church In Edmonton," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1958), p. 13.

³¹Souvenir pamphlet published on the centenary (1959) of Saint Joachim's Parish, Edmonton, p. 10.

priests were among the few capable of keeping the Indians under control and had felt that their presence at the fort would help keep trading on a peaceful basis.³² Regardless of the motive for the gift of the church it was well received by Father Lacombe and it remained the center of Catholic missionary activity at Fort Edmonton until 1877.

During December of 1860 Bishop Taché again visited Fort Edmonton and early in 1861, accompanied by Father Lacombe, founded on the banks of the Sturgeon River the site for the new mission of Saint Albert. One of the major considerations in the choice of this particular site was that it would be easier to serve the Saint Joachim's mission from it.³³ From 1861 to 1883 Saint Joachim's was served from Saint Albert, which in 1871 became the seat of the Episcopal See of Saint Albert with Monseigneur Vital Grandin, O.M.I., as its first Bishop.³⁴ Life at Saint Joachim's mission continued on in a very orderly fashion during this period, especially after 1862 when Brother Scollen, O.M.I., opened a school at the fort which taught English, a little French, catechism, and the method of serving Mass.³⁵ The school was the first regularly operated one in the West

³²Mgr. Vital Grandin, O.M.I., "Souveniers," Vol. VI, p. 35 (available at the archives of the Oblate Fathers, 9916 - 110 St., Edmonton).

³³Taché, p. 151.

³⁴Maclean, p. 25.

³⁵Souvenir pamphlet of Saint Joachim's, p. 10.

outside of the Red River Colony and at it children of English, Scottish, French, and Métis extraction all mingled freely together.³⁶ It remained open until 1868 while the church remained in the fort until 1876 when Christie, against the wishes of Bishop Grandin, demanded that it be dismantled and removed.³⁷

The role played by the French-speaking missionaries in the Edmonton area in terms of the preservation of the French language was undeniably a major one. Although their primary objective was that of Christianizing the Métis and Indians, their use of the French language in conjunction with the various Indian tongues plus their numerous writings in French helped ensure that an identifiable French element would remain in the area. When they first arrived the French-Canadians and many of the Métis were of course still speaking French but it is not at all certain they would have continued to do so if it had been English-speaking rather than French-speaking priests who had come to instruct them.

³⁶Father Paul Emile Breton, O.M.I., The Big Chief Of The Prairies (n.p.: Palm Publishers, 1955), p. 35.

³⁷Grandin, Vol. XXI, p. 602.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY 1877-1905:

POPULATION GROWTH

From 1795 to 1877 the development of the French-speaking presence in Edmonton revolved mainly around the employees of the fur trade fort and the missionaries who visited Saint Joachim's mission. After 1877 the composition of this presence gradually started to change as the hamlet of Edmonton began to grow apart from Edmonton House. In terms of the history of the French-speaking community the key event took place on January 14, 1877. On that date Reverend Father Henri Grandin, O.M.I., the nephew of Bishop Grandin, blessed the new Saint Joachim's Church which had been constructed on a piece of land donated by Malcolm Groat¹ (between 122 and 123 Streets south of Jasper Avenue). The existence of this church outside the fort served notice that the Roman Catholic Church meant to take an active part in the life of the new settlement. In addition it provided a nucleus around which new French-speaking arrivals in Edmonton could establish themselves and it acted as a focal point for the French-speaking population's religious and

¹Souvenir pamphlet of Saint Joachim's, p. 11.

social activities. At first the new church was not well attended, there being only twenty persons present for Mass on February 4, 1877, but thereafter the attendance grew so rapidly that Bishop Grandin soon felt it expedient that a resident curé be appointed. The first was Father Grandin who took up residence on October 1, 1883 in the company of Brother Zephyrin Lizée, O.M.I.²

Although the new Saint Joachim's Church was an important addition to the hamlet of Edmonton it was by no means the first building to appear outside the Hudson's Bay Company reserve. As early as fifteen years before there had been a few shacks constructed along the river inhabited by an assortment of miners attempting to pan gold from the river bed. These had been joined by a few other scattered buildings in the years after 1870 including the McDougall Mission built in 1871, Donald Ross's hotel built down the hill from it in 1876, and the houses of a few individuals who, like Malcolm Groat, desired to live outside the fort.³ There were also a few settlers beginning to establish themselves on river lots mostly on the south bank across from the fort. Some of these were French-speaking Métis and one of them, Laurence Garneau, owned the land now associated with the Garneau district near the University of Alberta. By the time of the first survey of Edmonton in the fall of

²Ibid.

³MacGregor, pp. 80-83.

1882 there were also numerous other French-speaking land owners present in the environs of the settlement including Joseph Hebert, G. Gagnon, C. Ouelette, P. Ouelette, Joseph Petrie, and Octave Bellerose.⁴

Edmonton settlement continued to grow slowly from its humble beginnings in the years before the Rebellion of 1885. There was widespread disappointment in 1881 when it was learned that the Canadian Pacific Railway would not pass through Edmonton, but a few people convinced of the future possibilities of the area continued to trickle in. Among these were several French-Canadians coming from Quebec, some of whom achieved a fair measure of success in the budding economic life of the young settlement. These were mostly men from middle class backgrounds and they tended to be attracted to two particular areas of livelihood, construction and retail merchandising. Perhaps the earliest arrival among them was Xavier St. Jean who reached Edmonton from Quebec around 1880. In 1881 he began advertising himself in Frank Oliver's newly initiated Edmonton Bulletin as a cabinet maker with a furniture factory in the rear of Heiminck's store on Main Street.⁵ By 1890 St. Jean had been sufficiently successful in the building trade to have acquired numerous buildings including a hotel in Fort Saskatchewan and the Canada Hotel, later the Queen's Hotel

⁴Ibid., p. 96 Composite map of Edmonton Settlement 1882.

⁵Edmonton Bulletin, Oct. 29, 1881.

in Edmonton.⁶

St. Jean was soon followed to Edmonton after 1880 by other French-Canadians. Possibly the most notable of these was Stanislas LaRue. LaRue had been born at Sainte Martine, Chateauguay County, Quebec in 1860 and had been educated at the Rigaud College of Quebec. After having worked as a clerk and bookkeeper at Kazabazua of the Gatineau River he had gone to Winnipeg in 1882 and then had continued on to Edmonton in 1883. When he arrived in Edmonton he immediately bought some land and then went to work as a surveyor for two years with J. Cameron. From July, 1885 to September, 1889 he clerked in Edmonton and then opened in partnership with J. H. Picard a general merchandise business known as LaRue and Picard, one of the most successful French-Canadian business undertakings of the early years.⁷

While men such as St. Jean and LaRue were beginning to better their condition of life, the earliest inhabitants of the North West, the Indians and Métis, were, as a result of various social and economic forces at work, approaching desperate conditions in the years prior to 1885. As a direct result of this situation rebellion broke out on March 27, 1885, and although the Indians and Métis of the Edmonton

⁶La Survivance, 16 oct., 1930.

⁷Archibald Oswald MacRae, History Of The Province of Alberta (n.p.: Western Canada Historical Co., 1912), I, p. 519; L'Ouest Canadien, 30 juin, 1898.

district remained at peace, the situation was for a time rather tense at the relatively unprotected settlement. Some French-speaking people who were residing in Edmonton at that time and some who were later to live there were directly involved in the military activities of the Rebellion of 1885. Stanislas LaRue, for example, abandoned his surveying job and joined the scouting party which covered the territory between Calgary and Edmonton during the whole course of the uprising.⁸ Gedeon Lacerte, who had come to the West in 1878 to work on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, enrolled under the command of General Strange and took part in the pursuit of Big Bear in the Cold Lake region. With the pay he received for his services he bought a covered wagon in Calgary and came back to Edmonton where he worked for a time clearing land for Xavier St. Jean before taking out a homestead near Winterburn.⁹ A third was Camille David who, although he did not live in Edmonton at the time of the Rebellion, was later to establish a prosperous hotel business in the town as an indirect result of it. David was with the 65th Regiment of Montreal when they came west as part of the forces sent to quell the uprising. After the surrender of Riel and the end of the fighting David was offered 500 acres of land near Duhamel in recognition of his services. This land became the nucleus

⁸MacRae, p. 519.

⁹La Survivance, 16 oct., 1930.

of a huge ranch that later employed twenty cowboys and ran over 2,000 head of cattle. Toward 1900 David sold the ranch and after a brief stint at Camrose he came to Edmonton where he bought out the proprietor of the flourishing Alberta Hotel with the money from the ranch.¹⁰

Meanwhile, during and immediately after the Rebellion the government had been at work making the first enumeration of the population of the North West, and when the Census of the Three Provisional Districts of the North-West Territories 1884-85 was published it showed some very interesting figures in terms of the French presence in the Edmonton area. Edmonton, including most of the area north of the settlement in the Provisional District of Alberta, was named as one of the three sub-districts of Alberta. The total population of the sub-district was given as 5,616 with 3,107 of these being Indians. Out of the total non-Indian population of 2,599 there were 582 whites of French racial origin and 940 Métis of French racial origin.¹¹ Thus 1,522 or almost sixty per cent of the total non-Indian population was of French racial origin. Although no figures were published for Edmonton settlement specifically, its population was probably around 300 at this time and at least half of this may be assumed to have been of French racial origin.

¹⁰ Ibid., 12 juin, 1930.

¹¹ Census of the Three Provisional Districts of the North-West Territories 1884-85, pp. 10-11.

With the end of the Rebellion in May, 1885 things had returned more or less to normal in this still relatively small settlement. Its population continued to grow only very slowly between 1885 and its incorporation as a town in 1892, when the population stood at 700.¹² In terms of the French-speaking contribution to this slowly growing population two opposing trends were at work, one tending to decrease and the other tending to increase their numbers.

The first of these trends was associated with the fate of the Métis and their gradual disappearance from Edmonton in the years after 1885. This decline and disappearance of the Métis was indissolubly linked with the drastic social and economic changes which the North West had undergone between 1870 and 1885. These included the appearance of a white, agriculturally orientated society in the West and the disappearance of the mainstay of the Métis' economy, the buffalo. As the railway gradually pushed west the need for voyageurs for the fur brigade was eliminated and as the buffalo vanished many Métis attached to Edmonton House as "fort hunters" had to find other employment. Other Métis who had in recent years been employed as freight haulers with the Hudson's Bay Company were also forced out of a job when the Company limited its contracts to its "établissements du nord" in 1884.¹³ Some of these had

¹²Edmonton Town Census, 1892 cited in MacGregor, p. 313.

¹³Giraud, p. 1172.

already turned to agriculture in the years before 1885 but they soon found that by character and upbringing they were unsuited to it and for the most part soon abandoned it.

It was the Rebellion of 1885, however, which was the real crisis point in the Métis' attempt to adapt to the new conditions which had gradually been imposing themselves in the previous fifteen years. Their defeat in the Rebellion accelerated the social and cultural dissolution already begun with the appearance of large numbers of white men previous to 1885 and resulted in the waning of their conception of themselves as a distinct and united national group. The resulting attitude of hopelessness led many of them to sell the land scrip granted to them by the government, often merely for alcohol or horses.¹⁴ Consequently most of them ended in a state of abject poverty and were forced either to seek entrance to the Indian reserves by virtue of their Indian blood or to throw themselves on the mercy of the Catholic missions. Others began drifting to areas such as Lesser Slave Lake and Lac la Biche where game was still fairly abundant and offered a subsistence level of living.

The gradual disappearance of the Métis from Edmonton was given added impetus in the years after 1895 when the two Oblate Fathers Albert Lacombe and Joseph-Adéodat Therien

¹⁴Ibid., p. 1215.

began a final attempt to teach them the agricultural and sedentary form of life.¹⁵ The attempt took the form of the creation of a strictly Métis agricultural colony at Saint Paul-des-Métis, but unfortunately because of lack of funds and lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Métis the venture failed and the area became a zone for French-Canadian colonization in 1909.¹⁶ It must be reiterated, however, that the disappearance of the Métis from Edmonton was not an abrupt process but rather a gradual one beginning after 1885 and continuing over many years. At the time of the census of Saint Joachim's in 1899 there were still 175 Métis living in the parish.¹⁷ In the years after the turn of the century continued inter-marriage of these Métis with whites resulted in many of the members of Edmonton's French-speaking community having some Métis blood in their ancestry.

The second trend at work during this period was the continuing appearance in Edmonton of French-Canadians coming from Quebec. These were part of a rather footloose group of individuals from the East moving from place to place in the West looking for something to satisfy their adventurous tastes and hopes for financial gain. This was by no means an organized movement, nor was it confined to

¹⁵ Emeric O. Drouin, Joyau Dans la Plaine (Quebec, 1968), p. 9.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 267.

¹⁷ L'Ouest Canadien, 2 fév., 1899.

French-Canadians; rather it was haphazard and included people of all backgrounds dissatisfied with life in the East. However, since most of the French-speaking people arriving in Edmonton in these years fell into this category and since many of them became important leaders of the community, it would be wise to review the experiences of a few of them.

One of the first individuals to arrive in Edmonton after the Rebellion was Georges Roy. Roy was born January 26, 1846 at Saint Anselme, Dorchester County, Quebec and after receiving his education at the Seminary of Quebec he, at the tender age of twenty-three, went to Windsor, Ontario to be the editor of L'Etoile Canadienne. Unable to settle down, in 1869 he joined a group of pioneers going from Saint Paul, Minnesota to Fort Garry. From 1870 to 1883 he held the post of the first assistant provincial secretary of the Province of Manitoba and had also invested heavily in real estate, a hotel, and eight trading posts. Losing all these investments in the financial panic of 1883, he became Registrar of Lands at Saint Norbert. He held this position until late in 1885 when he left to take a similar position in Edmonton. From the time of his arrival in Edmonton on September 8, 1886 Roy became one of the settlement's principal citizens and served as Registrar of Lands for twenty-seven years.¹⁸ He was joined at the Land Office in 1889 by

¹⁸ L'Ouest Canadien, 28 juin, 1898; La Survivance, 30 nov., 1932.

another French-Canadian named Jules Royal, the son of the fifth Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, Joseph Royal. Royal, like Roy, was very interested in the French cause in the West and both were subsequently very active in the affairs of Edmonton's French-speaking community.

Shortly after Roy's appearance another French-Canadian arrived in Edmonton who perhaps more than any other of the early French-speaking citizens was to take an active and effective part in the development of the hamlet into a prosperous town and then a great city. Joseph Henry Picard was born February 18, 1857 at Saint Jean de Matha, Quebec and after a primary education went to work for his uncle Jacques managing several of his enterprises. In 1884 he came west to Qu'Appelle and between then and 1887 worked in the construction trade at various points between Calgary and Regina. During early July, 1887 he met Father Lacombe in Calgary and was awakened by him to the great possibilities of the Edmonton area. On July 14, 1887 Picard arrived in Edmonton to establish himself permanently. For the first two years he was engaged in construction but finally in 1889 he went into partnership with the earlier arrival Stanislas LaRue in the general merchandising firm of LaRue and Picard, a business which lasted until 1907. From the time of his arrival he took a very real interest in the future of Edmonton as he was one of the original members of the Board

of Trade in 1889 and was elected to the second Town Council in 1893.¹⁹

The predilection of the new arrivals in Edmonton for taking part in some aspect of the construction trade, as Picard had done, was maintained in the persons of two other important individuals who arrived during these years, Raphael Duplessis and J. N. Pomerlau. Duplessis was born at Trois Rivières, Quebec in 1852 and after first trying the United States went on to Red River in 1882. In 1887 he arrived in Edmonton and immediately went to work in the construction trade, accomplishing his first major work in the building of the Springer Hotel on Sixth Street. Later on he complemented his work on large structures with the building of various sorts of river boats that were common on the North Saskatchewan in those days.²⁰ J. N. Pomerlau was also born in Quebec and like Duplessis went to Red River in the early 1880's. From there he went on to work on the Canadian Pacific Railroad until 1885 when he decided to come to Edmonton. Upon arrival he also entered into the construction business and built several structures in the east part of town. A few years later he became a pioneer in the hotel business as he was the proprietor of both the Richelieu and Windsor Hotels.²¹

¹⁹ Interview with J. Laurier Picard, October 22, 1970; MacRae, p. 519; La Survivance, 30 mai, 1934.

²⁰ La Survivance, 28 mars, 1929.

²¹ Ibid., 3 avril and 31 déc., 1935.

Meanwhile, with the arrival of some of the foregoing individuals and other French-speaking Catholics as well as fairly substantial numbers of English-speaking Catholics in the years immediately preceding and following the Rebellion, it soon became evident that a new and larger church was necessary. Land was acquired from the Hudson's Bay Company near the fort (110 Street and 99 Avenue) and Father Henri Grandin was charged with the direction of the construction of the new edifice. On August 22, 1886, the feast of Saint Joachim, the third Saint Joachim's Church was blessed by the administrator of the diocese Reverend Father Jean-Marie Lestanc, O.M.I., with the Oblate Fathers Grandin, Lizée and Blais and the entire Catholic population of Edmonton in attendance.²² With the matter of the new church attended to the attention of the clergy then shifted to a new field of endeavor--the provision of a school to teach the growing number of Catholic youth. In June, 1886 the problem had been partially solved when a Mr. Saint-Cyr had been hired to teach on a regular basis, but sufficient numbers of teachers were not really available until 1888 when Bishop Grandin succeeded in securing some Sisters of the Faithful Companions of Jesus to teach. The Sisters arrived in Edmonton in October, 1888 and immediately founded a convent for young girls. Then in 1889 when the first Catholic school was opened near their convent they began to teach

²²Souvenir pamphlet of Saint Joachim's, p. 11.

organized classes.²³ The opening of the Roman Catholic School was regarded as a great victory among French-speaking Catholics as was the formation of the Saint Joachim's Roman Catholic Separate School District, No. 7, toward the end of 1888. The latter was established after a petition requesting such a district was sent to the Educational Council at Regina by the Roman Catholic population of Edmonton. Upon the granting of their request a Board of Trustees was elected with Georges Roy serving as the first chairman, Luke Kelly as the first treasurer, and Antonio Prince as the first secretary.²⁴

With church and school well established the French-speaking clergy again began to search for further ways of maintaining the French Catholic presence in Edmonton and the surrounding area. The method hit upon was the promotion of organized French-speaking Catholic colonization and it was to be in the years after 1890 one of the most interesting and important considerations in the entire history of the French-speaking community.

Actually the first attempts to organize French-speaking colonization of the West had begun under the inspiration of Bishop Taché shortly after 1870. Prior to this date the clergy had discouraged immigration in an attempt to protect the Indians and Métis from the conceptions of

²³Ibid., p. 12.

²⁴Maclean, pp. 99-100.

white society. However, after 1870 when it became apparent that a wave of immigration would soon invade the West it was decided that it would be best to try attract French-speaking Catholics to protect the Indians and Métis against the influence of English-speaking Protestant Ontarians.²⁵ Although there was some success in Manitoba during the decade of the seventies, for the most part the attempts to attract French-speaking Quebeckers between 1870 and 1890 were unsuccessful owing mainly to three attitudes prevalent in Quebec during these years. These were: (1) a general lack of confidence in the lands of the West probably caused by reports of early failures who returned to Quebec and by the adverse reports previously circulated by the clergy in their attempts to discourage colonization, (2) a feeling that it was not safe for a French-Canadian to live outside the Province of Quebec caused mainly by the amnesty question after 1870 and later by the fate of Riel after 1885, (3) a feeling that by going from Quebec to live in Manitoba or the North-West Territories one was going into exile from his own kind.²⁶

The foregoing attitudes were not expelled easily but nevertheless by 1890 through much hard work the clergy had been fairly successful in eradicating them. This was

²⁵A. I. Silver, "French Canada and the Prairie Frontier 1870-1890," Canadian Historical Review, 50, (January, 1969), p. 13.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 15-18.

partly accomplished by les missionnaires-colonisateurs or colonization priests who were stationed in Quebec and the eastern United States with the intention of disseminating information on the West and organizing prospective groups of colonists. In 1891 Father Jean-Baptiste Morin, a missionnaire-colonisateur attached to the Canadian Immigration Bureau in Montreal, succeeded in organizing such a group of colonists and in bringing them to the Edmonton area to settle. This original group established itself in the Morinville area north of Saint Albert and it was followed in the next few years by groups settling in the predominantly French Legal, Beaumont, and Rivière-qui-Barre districts.²⁷ During the eight years after 1891 Father Morin continued in his capacity as organizer for colonization in the Edmonton area and in this short span of time succeeded in establishing 620 families in Edmonton and the eight distinctly French settlements that developed in the Edmonton area. A classification of these families, which comprised a total population of 2,479, shows that they were attracted from numerous different locations. These included: France, 20 families; Belgium, 20 families; Switzerland, 7 families; Quebec, 120 families; Ontario, 55 families; Manitoba, 15 families; B. C., 17 families; N. W. T., 35 families; New England states, 117 families; and other

²⁷C. A. Dawson, Group Settlement of Ethnic Communities in Western Canada, Vol. VII of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, ed. by W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (9 vols.; Toronto, 1934-40), p. 343.

states, 214 families.²⁸ The proportionately high number of families coming from the United States was probably due to the government's fairly effective attempts at repatriating Canadians living in the United States at this time and the intensive activity of colonizing priests in the New England area.

Although the object of organized colonization was to bring agricultural settlers to take out homesteads, many of the new arrivals decided to stay in Edmonton and test their fortune. Typical of these were two of the most important French-speaking citizens of Edmonton during this period, Joseph Hormidas Gariépy and Cleophas Turgeon. J. H. Gariépy was born December 3, 1852 at Saint Lin de l'Assomption, Quebec and received his early training as a clerk in a Montreal merchandising firm. He eventually became successively associate and proprietor of the business but in 1893 sold out in order to join one of Father Morin's groups going to the West. In 1894, shortly after his arrival in Edmonton, he went into partnership with an earlier arrival Joseph Chenier in the firm of general merchants Chenier and Gariépy, one of the most important business firms in the town at that time. Gariépy's great interest in the business affairs and development of the town led him in the succeeding years to become a member of the Board of Trade and of

²⁸ L'Ouest Canadien, 22 juin, 1899.

the Town Council.²⁹

Cleophas Turgeon, like Gariépy, came from Quebec with a group of Father Morin's in 1893 but originally went to settle at the new colony of Morinville. On a visit to Edmonton some time after this he met Mayor Matt McCauley and informed him that when he had lived in Montreal he had been an engineer with the fire department. McCauley promised him a similar position in Edmonton and in 1897 Turgeon became the town's first salaried functionary. His duties consisted of directing the volunteer fire department and of supervising the newly created police force, duties which he successfully performed until 1906 when he became engineer at the city penitentiary.³⁰

Gariépy and Turgeon were only two of the fairly large number of French-speaking Edmontonians brought in by Father Morin during these years. This is made evident by a glance at the parish census of Saint Joachim's taken at the conclusion of his work in 1899. According to the census there was a total population of 555 divided into 87 families. Of this total there were 195 French-Canadians, 9 French, 2 Belgians, 1 Swiss, 175 French-speaking Métis, 116 Irish, 29 English, 16 Germans, 10 Poles, and 2 Galicians.³¹ It must also be remembered, however, that at this time (circa 1898)

²⁹Ibid., 30 juin, 1898.

³⁰La Survivance, 13 mars and 9 oct., 1935.

³¹L'Ouest Canadien, 2 fév., 1899.

the work of Father Morin was given an added impetus by the Klondike gold rush and some of the French-Canadians coming to Edmonton in these years, such as P. E. Lessard and Dr. Philippe Roy who will be discussed later, were attracted by its possibilities.

Although Father Morin was recalled from his position as missionnaire-colonisateur in September, 1899 to become curé of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Montreal³², other priests were appointed to take his place, among them Reverend Father J. A. Ouellette. Yet after 1896 because of the aggressive immigration policy of the Laurier government there was a tremendous influx of settlers of all nationalities and it soon became difficult for the colonizing priests to keep up the percentage of them which were French-speaking. Thus in Edmonton while the French-speaking community continued to grow in the years prior to 1905 it fell to second place in terms of identifiable ethnic groups in the town, giving way to the English-speaking English-Irish-Scotch group.

³²Ibid., 21 sept., 1899.

CHAPTER III

THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY 1877-1905:

GROUP IDENTITY

The period from 1877 to 1905 which saw the formation and growth of a French-speaking community in the hamlet and subsequently the town of Edmonton also saw the beginning of this community's conception of itself as being a separate group with an identity different from the rest of the population. Prior to 1885 the majority of the population of Edmonton settlement was still of French racial origin and there was no need for them to worry about the retention of their French identity or language. However, as we have seen, the difficulty in attracting large numbers of French-Canadian settlers prior to 1890 and the steadily increasing influx of colonists of other nationalities during the nineties soon drastically reduced the proportion of French-speaking peoples in the total population. With this turn of events the necessity for action to protect the French identity became progressively more pressing in the years after 1890.

French-speaking Edmontonians had, of course, always been aware to some extent of their separate identity. This was largely due to the inspiration of the French-speaking

Catholic clergy who at all times made the promotion of an identity for French people separate from the English a cause célèbre. Indeed the whole conception and purpose of organized colonization for the French-speaking clergy was to further this ideal by attempting to make the difference between the old Quebec environment and the new western one as little different as possible.¹ One of the major manifestations of this was the creation of the French-Canadian parish which was present in Edmonton in the form of Saint Joachim's. The clergy also encouraged the traditional determination of French-Canadians to resist assimilation by closely integrating religion and race consciousness.² This tendency is made explicitly evident in a speech by Bishop Langevin to the French-speaking Catholics of Edmonton during the celebrations of the golden anniversary of Father Lacombe's ordination in September, 1899:

Restez français, de coeur, de pensée, parlez votre belle langue française, conservez précieusement cette portion de notre héritage à nous légué par nos pères. La langue française est la langue des rois; les diplomates de tous les pays se réunissent-ils pour décider les questions politiques et internationales, c'est en français que les délibérations ont lieu.

Parlez le français non seulement dans vos relations d'affaires, mais aussi dans vos familles. Nous sommes un peuple qui a une mission à remplir sur ce continent, nous avons des traditions de foi et de langue, conservons-les et pour les conserver il faut marcher avec notre clergé la main dans la main. Qui dit canadien-français

¹Silver, pp. 30-31.

²Dawson, p. 345.

dit catholique et la prospérité nationale de notre fidélité à notre religion. "L'une ne va pas sans l'autre".³

Although prior to 1890 Saint Joachim's parish served as the main institutional basis for the French-speaking identity in Edmonton, after that date its ability to continue to do so was somewhat weakened. This was due to the appearance of many English-speaking Catholics in Edmonton who, by virtue of the fact that it was the only Catholic church in Edmonton, attended Saint Joachim's. Soon it became necessary to have the sermon at Mass given in English as well as French. Thus a new vehicle in addition to the Church had to be found in order to maintain the French identity. This was accomplished by the creation of a local Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society.

The Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society had been founded in Montreal in 1834 by Ludger Duvernay with the hope that it would help to bind together the masses and the elite among French-Canadians who had gradually drifted more and more apart in the foregoing years. The organization had a flag similar to the one used by the "Patriots of 1837", an emblem, and a motto. The motto was "Nos institutions, notre langue et nos droits" and it more or less summed up the founder's intent to awaken a feeling of nationalism in the

³L'Ouest Canadien, 28 sept., 1899.

French-Canadian people.⁴ An organization of this type served well the needs of Edmonton's French-speaking community and on April 8, 1894 la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste d'Edmonton officially came into existence with Georges Roy, formerly the president of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society of Saint Boniface, as the first president. The other original officers elected included as first vice-president, J. H. Gariépy; second vice-president, F. Mariaggi; secretary, Wilfrid Gariépy; treasurer, J. H. Picard; marshal, Joseph Brunelle; managing committee, Stanislas LaRue, Antonio Prince, G. Corriveau, Joseph Chenier, and F. Degagné.⁵ The goal decided upon by the new group was "grouper les forces vives de notre nationalité, et de les développer chez chacun de nous a côté d'une loyauté à toute épreuve aux institutions britanniques l'amour de tout ce qui fait que nous sommes français tout en étant Canadiens".⁶ It was also decided at the founding meeting that a holiday would be proclaimed every year on or about June 24, the feast day of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. A description of the first of these celebrations to be held which appeared in the Edmonton Bulletin shows the great enthusiasm with which they were received by the

⁴Jean-C. Bonenfant and Jean-C. Falardeau, "Cultural and Political Implications of French-Canadian Nationalism," in French-Canadian Nationalism An Anthology, ed. by Ramsay Cook (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969), pp. 21-22.

⁵Edmonton Bulletin, April 9, 1894; L'Ouest Canadien, 30 juin, 1898.

⁶Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 9 avril, 1908.

French-speaking community:

. . . At an early hour the people began to arrive from a distance to take part in the procession. The Columbia Hotel of Joseph Brunelle at which the muster took place was decorated for the occasion with flags and evergreens. Promptly at 10 o'clock the procession started and moved along Jasper Avenue to Saint Joachim's Church in the following order: Major, J. Brunelle mounted; Union Jack; Edmonton brass band in uniform; banner of the Fort Saskatchewan society between two mounted men; carriage with four mounted men carrying the emblem of the society, and a little boy--the son of R. Duplessis--holding aloft a cross with a lamb beside him. Then the flag of the Edmonton society, followed by the members of the Society on foot. Then a carriage in which were the president, Georges Roy, vice-president, J. H. Gariépy and Mayor McCauley and a number of other vehicles occupied by friends of the society, including a large proportion of ladies. Mass was celebrated in Saint Joachim's Church and the picnic is now in progress. Dance tonight at Robertson hall.⁷

Once the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society was well established other measures to continue the process of making manifest the French-speaking presence in Edmonton and area were pursued. Perhaps one of the most noteworthy of these was the beginning on February 3, 1898 of the weekly French language newspaper L'Quest Canadien. This paper was published under the auspices of la Société de la Colonisation d'Edmonton, an organization created by Father Morin with the objective of promoting French-speaking Catholic colonization of the Edmonton district. Other members of the organization included Frederic Villeneuve, a young lawyer recently arrived from Quebec; Joseph E. Laurencelle, the

⁷ Edmonton Bulletin, June 25, 1894.

manager of the Banque Jacques Cartier in Edmonton; Joseph Cartier, a well-known local bookkeeper; and Eugene Villeneuve, a merchant in Montreal who helped manage promotion in Quebec. The group felt that a journal promoting French-speaking colonization would "faire connaitre à tous ceux-qui ont jamais rêvé de s'établir sur une ferme que nous avons ici dans l'Alberta tous les avantages qu'un colon peut souhaiter".⁸ L'Ouest Canadien undoubtedly at least partially fulfilled this hope but at the same time its reporting of the social, religious, economic, and political activities of the French-speaking community helped to make the presence of the community known. Under the editorship of Frederic Villeneuve the paper ran successfully until February, 1900 but was then forced to terminate publication because of financial problems.⁹

Although the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society and the French language newspaper L'Ouest Canadien were both important manifestations of the French-speaking identity in Edmonton, the community was also interested in promoting its presence in the wider spheres of activity connected with schools and politics. The first of these, the schools, became increasingly important as the English-speaking Catholic population of Edmonton expanded during the decade of the nineties. As has been pointed out, of the three original

⁸L'Ouest Canadien, 3 fév., 1898.

⁹Ibid., 22 fév., 1900.

trustees on the Separate School Board in 1888 two of them, Georges Roy and Antonio Prince, were French-speaking and they adequately represented the French population. However, as time progressed and the English-speaking Catholic element increased it was brought to the attention of French-speaking Catholics that to ensure the protection of their rights they would have to continually reaffirm their position on the Separate School Board. This was made particularly evident during the 1890's with the attacks on the French language in the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories and in the Manitoba schools controversy. As a result J. H. Gariépy and J. H. Picard were elected as trustees in 1898 and 1899 respectively and served throughout the remainder of the period. They were complemented by Lucien Dubuc, a young French-Canadian lawyer who served as Secretary of the Board between 1901 and 1905.¹⁰

On the local political scene the interests of the French-speaking community were upheld by J. H. Picard who was first elected to the Municipal (Town) Council of Edmonton in 1893. Henceforth Picard served on this Council, with the exception of one brief period, until the incorporation of Edmonton as a city in 1904.¹¹ The only year he failed to be elected was in 1899 and L'Ouest Canadien roundly roasted French-speaking electors in its columns for not taking

¹⁰Maclean, p. 100.

¹¹MacRae, p. 519.

sufficient interest in the election. In addition the paper claimed that there were enemies of the French among the population of Edmonton who made it their business to eliminate the French-speaking element from the Council.¹² After this Picard was duly returned at every succeeding election.

Undoubtedly the Separate School Board and the Municipal Council of Edmonton were valid areas of concern for the French-speaking community, but it was in the councils of the Territorial Government where the real battles over French Catholic religious, language, and school rights were fought and where representation was most needed. Since this area was so vital it is necessary to examine the various questions which arose during this period and review their reception by the French-speaking representatives and the community.

Under the terms of "The North-West Territories Act, 1875" a section was included that gave the right to a minority of rate payers of any district, whether they were Protestant or Roman Catholic, to establish separate schools and to be liable to support only these schools.¹³ In addition, in an ammendment to this Act of 1875 known as "The North-West Territories Act, 1877" it was provided that either the English or the French language could be used in the debates of the North-West Territories Council and in proceedings

¹²L'Ouest Canadien, 14 déc., 1899.

¹³Statutes of Canada, 38 Vict., c. 49, s. 11.

before the Courts and that both languages must be used in the Council's records and journals and in the publishing of its ordinances.¹⁴ These two very important Statutes formed the bases of French Catholic rights in the North-West Territories prior to 1905 and the French-speaking community of Edmonton and surrounding area made it their primary political objective to maintain these rights.

Prior to 1885 there was no French-speaking representative for the District of Alberta in the North-West Territories Council. The electoral district of Edmonton had been created on January 22, 1883 under the provisions of "The North-West Territories Act, 1875", and in the election of March 29, 1883 Frank Oliver had been returned as the elected member. However, on August 4, 1885 owing to the size and population of the Edmonton constituency it was divided in two, thereby enabling the Métis to elect a representative in the new constituency of Saint Albert.¹⁵ The first election in the constituency was held on September 15, 1885 with the battle fought on purely local issues between J. Lamoureux and S. Cunningham with the latter emerging the victor.¹⁶ The fact that this election did not see any discussion of the question of separate schools or the use of

¹⁴ Ibid., 40 Vict., c. 7, s. 11.

¹⁵ Lewis Herbert Thomas, The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories 1870-97 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), p. 116.

¹⁶ Edmonton Bulletin, 5 and 19 Sept., 1885.

the French language indicates the general satisfaction of the French-speaking population with the conditions provided for in the Acts of 1875 and 1877 and a further ordinance concerning schools passed in August, 1884. According to this ordinance separate school districts might be organized out of one, two or more adjoining public school districts; religious instruction might be given in the last hour of the afternoon; and a Board of Education was established composed of two sections, one Protestant and one Catholic, with each in charge of the conduct of its own schools.¹⁷

Such was the state of affairs until the creation on May 22, 1888 of the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories. The Assembly possessed the same legislative powers as its predecessor and was originally composed of representatives from sixteen one member and three two member constituencies of which Edmonton was one.¹⁸ Under the new system the constituency of Saint Albert was eliminated and another French-speaking representative from the Edmonton area was not elected to the Assembly until 1891. Meanwhile, in 1889 Dalton McCarthy proposed legislation in the Federal Parliament to abolish the use of the French language in the North-West Territories and after bitter debate a compromise was reached in "The North-West Territories Amendment Act, 1891". The Act provided that after the next general

¹⁷Ordinances of the N.W.T., 1884, no. 5.

¹⁸L. H. Thomas, p. 152.

election of the Legislative Assembly it could, by ordinance or otherwise, regulate its proceedings and the manner of recording and publishing them, the regulations decided upon to be published in a proclamation made by the Lieutenant-Governor.¹⁹ The same Act provided for the increase in the number of seats in the Assembly from twenty-two to twenty-six and Saint Albert, with its boundaries drawn so that the French-speaking electors would form the majority, was among those added.²⁰

The election of October 31, 1891 marked the beginning of a crucial period in the attempts of the French-speaking community to maintain what it felt were its legitimate rights. In the election Antonio Prince was elected over Dan Maloney in the Saint Albert constituency on a platform of protection for the French language and separate schools.²¹ Prince was a well-known French-Canadian lawyer in Edmonton and his election marked the beginning of a trend that was to appear again and again in the political history of the French-speaking community of Alberta--the election of a French-speaking Edmontonian, often a lawyer, to represent a predominantly French rural constituency.

As was expected Frederick Haultain moved in the session of 1892 "that it is desirable that the proceedings

¹⁹Statutes of Canada, 54-55 Vict., c. 22, s. 18.

²⁰L. H. Thomas, p. 200.

²¹Edmonton Bulletin, Nov. 14, 1891; L. H. Thomas, p. 202.

of the Legislative Assembly shall be recorded and published hereafter in the English language only".²² An amendment was moved by Prince, backed by a multitude of arguments, which proposed that it was not in the public interest to make any changes as far as the use of French was concerned.²³ Prince was supported in his amendment by the members for Prince Albert, Batoche, and Mitchell but the amendment was defeated by a vote of twenty to four. The passing of the motion was regarded as a great blow in the French-speaking community and as late as 1898 the press was still protesting boisterously against what was felt to be an injustice. An article which appeared in L'Ouest Canadien on March 17, 1898 claimed that the government's failure to print the ordinances of the Legislature in French since 1892 was a violation of French rights and exhorted French-speaking people to write to Regina and demand that the ordinances again be published in French.²⁴

The session of 1892 also saw the introduction of an ordinance with respect to education which the French-speaking community felt was prejudicial to them as Catholics. It provided for the replacement of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Board of Education by a Council of Public Instruction

²²Journals of the N.W.T., 1891-92, p. 110, cited by G. M. Weir, The Separate Schools Question in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1934), p. 270.

²³Ibid.

²⁴L'Ouest Canadien, 17 mars, 1898.

which consisted of the members of the executive committee and two Protestants and two Roman Catholics appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. In effect the ordinance meant that the government gained complete control of all schools since the two Protestants and Catholics appointed had no vote.²⁵ Furthermore the Council of Public Instruction gained the power to demand uniform academic training and certification of teachers, uniform inspection, uniform use of texts, and uniform examination standards.²⁶ Although the system in effect under this ordinance still allowed separate schools and two Catholics on the Council of Public Instruction, the community was against it because, as noted by Father Leduc, it gave Catholics no control over choice of texts, examinations, qualifications, and diplomas and the Catholics on the Council of Public Instruction possessed no real power.²⁷ As a result Antonio Prince moved an amendment in the Assembly which was in effect a vote of want of confidence in the executive but it was defeated by a vote of ten to five.²⁸ In the next two years numerous petitions were sent to the Assembly protesting the ordinance, but after the Assembly concurred in a report by the Standing School Committee refusing to change the system the question

²⁵Ordinances of the N.W.T., 1892, no. 22.

²⁶Weir, p. 65.

²⁷L'Ouest Canadien, 14 avril, 1898.

²⁸Edmonton Bulletin, Jan. 30, 1892.

was laid to rest.²⁹

For the next few years there was little overt action by the French-speaking community with respect to the language or schools question. In the election of October, 1894 Prince was defeated in Saint Albert by Dan Maloney, a local man, and during his three year term there was little of note which aroused interest. However, the election campaign of 1898 was an entirely different matter as there was a real awakening of interest in the French-speaking community, probably at least partially due to the exhortations of L'Ouest Canadien. At the annual Saint-Jean-Baptiste day celebration held in Morinville on June 24, 1898 it was resolved that it was the duty of French-Canadians to demand the publication of ordinances in French and a hope was expressed that in the next territorial election a French-Canadian would be elected to represent the French element.³⁰ Shortly after this Frederic Villeneuve, the lawyer-newspaper editor from Edmonton, was nominated as the French-speaking candidate to oppose Maloney in the election. Villeneuve campaigned on a platform of demands for French and Catholic rights and the only opposition he met stemmed from the fact that he was from outside the constituency while Maloney was a farmer and a resident of the area. However, during the

²⁹C. Cecil Lingard, Territorial Government in Canada --The Autonomy Question in the Old North-West Territories (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), p. 157.

³⁰L'Ouest Canadien, 30 juin, 1898.

campaign he constantly stressed that the interests of Edmonton were the same as those of Saint Albert and he eventually emerged the victor by a majority of 137 votes.³¹

During Villeneuve's term of office the major issues of concern were as usual the schools question plus the beginning of agitation for provincial autonomy. In 1901 a new schools ordinance was passed which provided that all schools were to be under the control of a Commissioner of Education assisted by an Educational Council composed of five persons, at least two of whom were to be Roman Catholics.³² In addition the ordinance provided (1) that all schools were to be taught in the English language, but that it was permissible for the board of any district to cause a primary grade to be taught in the French language, (2) that the board of any district could, subject to the regulations of the Department, employ one or more competent persons to give instruction in any language other than English in the schools of the district to all pupils whose parents or guardians had signified a willingness that they should receive the same, (3) that the board should have the power to raise such sums of money as necessary to pay the salaries of such instructors, and all costs, charges and expenses of such course of instruction should be collected by the board by a special rate to be imposed upon the parents or guardians

³¹Ibid., 18 août, 1898; Edmonton Bulletin Nov. 10, 1898.

³²Ordinances of the N.W.T., 1901, c. 29, s. 8.

of such pupils who took advantage of it.³³

Meanwhile, owing mainly to financial considerations, the question of provincial autonomy was becoming increasingly important.³⁴ In the session of 1900 Frederick Haultain had introduced a motion, which received unanimous approval, to enquire into the terms upon which the Territories might enter into Confederation as provinces.³⁵ The French-speaking community was in favor of this action provided that due consideration be given to each segment of the population, a theme that remained their chief contention throughout the struggle for provincial autonomy.³⁶ Villeneuve supported the autonomy movement vigorously although he voted against the motion of Haultain in 1902 expressing regret at the federal government's failure to deal with the provincial question at that time. This negative vote, however, simply signified that Villeneuve identified himself with those favoring a two province scheme.³⁷

Villeneuve was replaced as the representative for Saint Albert in the election of May 21, 1902 by L. J. A. Lambert. Lambert, who was born at Terrebonne, Quebec on November 21, 1858, had pursued various professions in Quebec

³³ Ibid., s. 136.

³⁴ Lingard, pp. 10-17.

³⁵ Journals of the N.W.T., 1900, pp. 70-72, cited in Lingard, p. 27.

³⁶ L'Ouest Canadien, 25 août, 1898.

³⁷ Lingard, p. 67.

before coming to Alberta with his family at the beginning of 1900. After working briefly for LaRue and Picard he had established himself on a farm near Saint Albert although later on at the expiration of his mandate he came to Edmonton where he opened a very successful livery stables business, the Écuries Imperiales.³⁸ Lambert pursued a course similar to Villeneuve's in the Legislative Assembly, being particularly interested in protecting the language and school rights that remained to French-speaking Catholics in the forthcoming Autonomy Bills. In this endeavor he was vociferously backed by the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society of Edmonton which in February, 1904, just prior to the introduction of the Bills, sent a communication to Prime Minister Laurier urging the government to guarantee the legitimate rights of French-Canadians. The Society, in what perhaps may best be described as their overexuberance, asked that French be declared an official language in the new province and that it be guaranteed as a language of instruction in the schools.³⁹ It is quite likely that the forwarding of this communication to the Prime Minister was done at the instigation of the French-speaking Catholic clergy who freely admitted that they were opposed to any compromise on the question of the separate schools which they felt were

³⁸ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 31 août, 1911.

³⁹ Laurier Papers, pp. 243-45, cited by Lingard, pp. 134-35.

their "sacred" right.⁴⁰ The eventual settlement of the Autonomy Bills crisis by Laurier's compromise of continuing the system in force under the Ordinance of 1901 came nowhere near meeting the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society's hopes. However, it is unquestionable that a majority of the French-speaking community realized that in the maintenance of separate schools which allowed the teaching of a primary grade in French they were being fairly treated and accepted the provisions of the Autonomy Bills in good grace.⁴¹

From the foregoing study of French-speaking participation in these facets of the life of the town of Edmonton and its vicinity, especially in religious, social, educational, and political activities, it is obvious that the French-speaking population were interested in acting as a group with a particular identity and possessing certain interests and rights. In the pursuit of this objective there was a tendency for an elite to emerge to guide the community. Obviously the Roman Catholic Church which formed the principal structure of authority and power in the community played a major role in supplying this elite. But the clergy were not alone as in the years after 1890 many of the leading French-speaking businessmen, professional men, and politicians such as Georges Roy, J. H. Picard, J. H.

⁴⁰Lingard, p. 139.

⁴¹Interviews with A.-M. Déchène, September 29, 1970 and Father Ludovic LaRose, O.M.I., October 1, 1970.

Gariépy, Stanislas LaRue, Frederic Villeneuve, and Antonio Prince clearly emerged as leaders of the rest of the community. This tendency was not at all surprising since it followed fairly closely the prevailing social structure of French-Canadian society in Quebec. In addition to the clergy the social category of the elite in Quebec had evolved from the political leaders on one hand and the professional men such as doctors and lawyers on the other, with a good deal of movement between the two groups. Added to these were the businessmen who toward the end of the nineteenth century had also begun to acquire sufficient importance to be identified as a group in the elite-producing process.⁴² The French-speaking community of Edmonton thus possessed all the pre-requisites for the formation of an elite and these were constantly being added to with the appearance of many more professional and businessmen prior to 1905. Among these were such noteworthy individuals as Prosper Edmond Lessard, Dr. Philippe Roy, Dr. Aristide Blais, Wilfrid Gariépy, and Jean-Leon Côté, but since their time of primary importance lay in the years after 1905 they will be discussed later.

Before proceeding to the post-1905 era it is necessary to examine a few further contributions of French-

⁴²Jean-C. Falardeau, "Evolution Des Structures Sociales Et Des Elites Au Canada Francais," in Structures Sociales du Canada francais, ed. by Guy Sylvestre (n.p.: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 11.

speaking people to the life of Edmonton during this period, especially in the service field. In 1881 the Sisters of Charity (Soeurs Grises) of Montreal established the first hospital in the northern part of Alberta at the Saint Albert mission. Edmonton proper lacked such a facility and in 1894 a group of doctors wrote Bishop Grandin promising their financial support if the Grey Nuns would consent to open a hospital in the town. Soon after Bishop Grandin gave his consent Reverend Sister Brassard, Superior of the Orphanage at Saint Albert, purchased forty-six lots from the Hudson's Bay Company. During the winter of 1894-95 work was begun on the General Hospital and by December 17, 1895 the brick and stone thirty-five bed structure was completed and occupied by Sisters Gosselin and Marie Xavier who were in charge.⁴³ The construction of this hospital was followed in 1905 by the beginning of work on the Misericordia Hospital under the auspices of the Sisters of Mercy (Soeurs de la Miséricorde) although it was not until five years later that it was finally completed.⁴⁴

Not only did these two hospitals perform a real service to the community but they along with several other structures made the French presence in the town known through a distinctive style of architecture. The General

⁴³Maclean, p. 123.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 126.

Hospital, with several classical and Victorian modifications, expressed many of the qualities of the nineteenth century type of Quebec urban house, especially in its distinctive roof style punctuated by small dormer windows. The same features were even more apparent on the Misericordia Hospital with the added touch of Quebec present in the flared eaves on the roof. In addition the new Saint Joachim's Church completed in 1899 was in some of its features reminiscent of the archetype of Quebec parish churches built as early as the middle of the seventeenth century for Bishop Laval of Quebec. The similarities between Saint Joachim's and these Quebec churches, which over the centuries had become a symbol of la survivance for French-Canadians, included the high pitched wooden roof, the proportionately high central clocher, and the small rounded window on the facade.

In subsequent years other distinctively French structures were added to the foregoing ones, perhaps the most interesting of them being the Lemarchand Mansion and the houses of some of the French community's more prominent members. The Lemarchand Mansion (116 St. and 100 Ave.) was built in 1909 and expressed French classical features both in its basic plan of a central block with side wings forming a court and in the detail of pillars, pilasters, and ornate cornices. The residences of prominent French-Edmontonians, which tended to be located in an area extending along either

side of Victoria (100th) Avenue from 104 Street to 119 Street, were basically Victorian in architectural style but some did show French modifications. For example, the Gariépy residence at 9947 - 104 Street (now Rosary Hall) and the Lessard residence at 11936 - 100 Avenue both had prominently displayed pointed turrets on one corner, a direct copy from the style of French chateaus. In total the presence in Edmonton of these houses and the other buildings mentioned provided a further cultural contribution of the French-speaking community to the fast growing town.

CHAPTER IV

COMMUNITY WITHIN A COMMUNITY 1905-14:

SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS, AND

ECONOMIC LIFE

With Edmonton's incorporation as a city on November 7, 1904 and its proclamation as the capital of the newly inaugurated Province of Alberta on September 1, 1905 it entered upon one of its most active periods of growth and development. Between the Census of the City of Edmonton of 1904 and that of 1914 the population increased from 8,350 to 72,516¹ while the city experienced enormous growth both in area with the amalgamation of Edmonton and Strathcona in 1912 and in the development of its business and industrial activity. During the same period the French-speaking community grew from approximately 500 in 1904 to 3,500 in 1914² mainly as a result of continued organized colonization and natural increase. Although the total percentage of French-speaking people in the population decreased with the great influx of foreign immigrants into the area, it may be unhesitatingly

¹Census' of the City of Edmonton 1904 and 1914 cited in MacGregor, p. 313.

²Author's estimate from Census of Canada, 1901, Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1916, and various newspaper articles and interviews.

stated that at no other time were they more active in the life of the city. Their presence was as much felt in all spheres of social, religious, economic, educational, and political activity at this time as it had been earlier when they formed a much larger proportion of the population. At the same time the social structure of the community became even more clearly defined as the necessity for an elite to represent the community's interests and to guide them in the battle to maintain their rights became increasingly more apparent as their proportion declined.

The closely-knit social unit which the community had begun to form in the preceding two decades continued to evolve in the period between 1905 and 1914. Testimony is given to this by the increase in social functions within the community, by the large number of marriages among members of the community, by the division of two Roman Catholic parishes along ethnic lines, and above all by the creation of numerous new French-speaking organizations.

First of all, the favorite form of social contact in the French-speaking community, the soirée, reached full bloom in these years with the various important individuals, church groups, or other organizations striving to outdo each other in presenting these entertaining and informative evening assemblies. Usually the soirée took the form of a card party followed by a musical presentation and concluded with refreshments, but often a lecture and discussion on some topic of interest was included as well. Other social

functions were held on the anniversaries of important individuals, such as the diamond anniversary of Father Lacombe's ordination in September, 1909, or to celebrate the visit of well-known French-speaking personages to the Edmonton area, such as the reception held for Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier in Saint Albert in August, 1910.³ But the social event of the year continued to be the celebration of Saint-Jean-Baptiste day which usually brought together the members of Edmonton's French-speaking community with those of the predominantly French villages to the north of the city. It was the custom during these years to move the celebrations to a different village each year and they were always well attended. The one held at Morinville in 1907, for example, attracted 1,500 participants.⁴

Although the soirées and other social functions contributed greatly to the feeling of community among French-speaking Edmontonians, no single factor provided more lasting bonds than the numerous ties of marriage between fellow Frenchmen. Take for example the case of three of the most important families of the community who were linked by marriage ties, the Gariépys, the Lessards, and the Déchènes. The fact that Wilfrid Gariépy was married to Albertine Lessard, P. E. Lessard to Helene Gariépy, and Joseph-Miville Déchène to Marie Gariépy ensured close cooperation among

³Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 9 sept., 1909 and 11 août, 1910.

⁴Ibid., 27 juin, 1907.

these subsequently very important men and played a key role in their position among the elite of the community. The great increase in this type of intra-community marriages during this period soon resulted in most of the families of the community being related in some manner or other.

A further factor which contributed to the distinct identity of the French-speaking community apart from other ethnic groups was the tremendous growth of the Roman Catholic Church which eventually resulted in the return of the strictly French-speaking parish. The great increase of English-speaking Catholics in Saint Joachim's Parish during the 1890's had already resulted in it taking on a bilingual character. With the continuing population growth after the turn of the century it was soon obvious that one church would not suffice to serve the entire Catholic population of Edmonton. Efforts to alleviate this problem had begun as early as 1895 when a small chapel was opened in Strathcona, later to become Saint Anthony's Parish⁵, but this only served to ease the burden on the south side of the river. Finally Bishop Emile Legal, O.M.I., who had succeeded Bishop Grandin upon his death on June 3, 1902, decided that a new church was needed in Edmonton proper. He assigned the task of providing one to the newly appointed curé of Saint Joachim's, Reverend Father Alphonse Jan, O.M.I., who charged

⁵ Maclean, p. 41.

his vicar, Reverend Father Pierre Hétu, O.M.I., with organizing a funds subscription and with overseeing the construction of the new church to be known as Immaculate Conception. The edifice was built at the corner of Kinistino Avenue (96 St.) and Picard Street (108 Ave.) on five lots donated by Bishop Legal and was blessed by him on December 8, 1906. The first resident cure was Reverend Father Alphonse Lemarchand, O.M.I., who arrived in May, 1907.⁶ Other Roman Catholic churches were established with increasing frequency after the appearance of Immaculate Conception including Saint Francis, built in North Edmonton by the Franciscans in 1912; Saint Edmund's, built in Calder in 1911; Saint Francis Xavier which began by using the chapel of the Jesuit College in 1913; and Saint René, later the Assumption Parish, built at 90 Street and 95 Avenue in 1913 to alleviate the burden on Saint Anthony's.⁷

At the beginning of the period the majority of the parishoners of Saint Joachim's, Saint Anthony's, and Immaculate Conception were of the French language. However, as the flood of immigrants of all nationalities into Edmonton continued after 1905 this majority was rather quickly diminished. The sermon at Mass was already being given in English at Saint Joachim's prior to 1905 and this soon became

⁶ La Survivance, 2 déc., 1931--article published on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the parish.

⁷ Maclean, pp. 46-47, 52-53.

normal in the other two parishes. In fact in the polyglot Immaculate Conception Parish it soon became necessary to have the sermon in four languages; French, English, Polish, and German. Because of the difficulties inherent in this situation Bishop Legal decided to divide Immaculate Conception and Saint Joachim's Parishes along ethnic lines. On June 19, 1910 Immaculate Conception was divided in two with the old parish remaining French while the new Sacred Heart Parish became "Irish", although in actuality it included many nationalities.⁸ In 1913 Saint Joachim's Parish followed suit with the original parish remaining French while the new Saint Joseph's Parish became English. Both parishes were forced to use Saint Joachim's Church until 1925 when work was completed on Saint Joseph's Cathedral.⁹

Although French-speaking priests were often the original curés of some of the other new parishes in addition to Saint Joachim's and Immaculate Conception, there were signs toward the end of the period that because of a shortage of French-speaking priests they would serve only French parishes while English-speaking priests served the others. This was contrary to the hopes of many of the Oblates, including Bishop Legal, who still entertained ideas of the Edmonton area as a French-speaking Catholic region with Saint

⁸ La Survivance, 2 déc., 1931.

⁹ Souvenir pamphlet of Saint Joachim's, p. 15.

Albert as the seat of government for the whole ecclesiastical district. Their hopes were dealt a further blow on November 30, 1912 when on the creation of the Archdiocese of Edmonton the ecclesiastical seat was transferred from Saint Albert to the city.¹⁰ Nevertheless in Edmonton with the creation of two entirely French-speaking parishes the religious life of the community which for several years had been shared with members of other ethnic groups was once again thrown back on its strictly French basis. Because of the diversity of Roman Catholic Church activities and groups the result of this was the strengthening of the ties within the community and a further manifestation of a separate French presence in the city.

Beyond the activities associated with the Church there were numerous other ethnic organizations appearing in these years around which the life of the community tended to focus. Several factors account for this proliferation and before the organizations themselves are studied it would be valuable briefly to review at least three factors which seem to warrant particular attention. First of all, and perhaps most obviously, the increase in the French-speaking population of Edmonton demanded that new organizations be created. It was inevitable with the arrival of new French-speaking immigrants in Edmonton who had not only a diversity of interests and ideas but also a familiarity with new

¹⁰ Maclean, pp. 55-56.

organizations, especially those in Quebec, that there would be new groups formed in addition to the existing Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society. Yet most of these groups tended to be defensive in nature as generally speaking they were formed for the purpose of la survivance--the protection of the French-Canadian language, religion, and culture. With this in mind the other factors in their increase become fairly apparent. Just as the increased number of French-speaking immigrants coming from Quebec, the eastern United States, and Europe demanded new and larger organizations, so too the awareness of these people of their minority position in their new chosen homeland made doubly acute the necessity of creating these new protective groups. Furthermore, and perhaps most important since it was the most immediate factor, the attacks on French-speaking Catholics in the Manitoba schools crisis in the 1890's and in the struggle for their rights in the Autonomy Bills of 1905 brought western French Catholics face to face with the realities of their rather precarious position. Attacks of this nature were felt by even the most complacent of French-speaking Edmontonians and made them receptive to ideas of organization. As a consequence of these three foregoing factors, at least seven new organizations of various types and with various goals appeared in this intensely active period while at the same time the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society underwent a considerable reorganization and growth in membership.

It has already been shown how the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society became one of the original rallying points for Edmonton's French-speaking community in 1894. By 1908, however, its structure had become somewhat outdated and a committee was formed to re-draw and modernize the constitution. The committee's suggestions amounted to a streamlining of the organization including the replacement of the Administrative Committee and the former officers by a single Bureau of Direction composed of a president, treasurer, and four directors; an official name change to l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste d'Edmonton; more extensive power for officers; a change in the system of amending the constitution; new provisions which allowed membership by election to "tout Canadien d'origine française de père ou de mère et de tout étranger de langue française appartenant à la religion catholique résidant dans la province"; and finally provisions for the election of an honorary president each year, preferably "le Canadien-français de la Province ayant la position sociale la plus élevée". The revised goal of the Association according to Article 2 of the new constitution was "d'unir les Canadiens-français de l'Alberta et plus spécialement de la ville d'Edmonton, en leur procurant l'occasion de se reconstruire et de se mieux connaître; de favoriser le développement et l'étude de la langue française dans l'Ouest Canadien; de veiller aux intérêts nationaux; et de contribuer à la prospérité et au bien être de la population de langue

française de la Province et des membres de l'Association en particulier".¹¹

With its constitution more attuned to the time l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste d'Edmonton continued in the years after 1908 its important role in the community, although its rather monopolistic position was soon challenged by the appearance of several new organizations. Among these were l'Alliance Nationale and les Artisans Canadiens-français, both mutual societies imported from Quebec. L'Alliance Nationale, which had been founded by Archbishop Fabre of Montreal in 1892, appeared in Edmonton in August, 1911 and was soon followed in October, 1911 by les Artisans Canadiens-français, which had originated in Quebec in 1876.¹² Both of the local Edmonton branches were parts of a federative system that was intended to extend to all French Catholic groups in America in order to unify their moral and material interests. As such, part of these groups' activities was socially orientated and usually took the form of meetings or soirées at which the French language and the Roman Catholic Church were promoted. But their major consideration was with the provision of various kinds of financial benefits to the community particularly in the form of life and accident insurance and loans.¹³

¹¹ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 7 mai, 1908.

¹² Ibid., 3 août and 5 oct., 1911

¹³ Interviews with J. O. Pilon, November 2, 1970 and J. J. LeBlanc, November 3, 1970.

Another area in which organizations began to take root during these years was among the French-speaking youth of the city. Even though they were often members of the aforementioned groups, the fast multiplying youth felt the need to express themselves as a distinct part of the community with something in particular to offer. Their desire took expression in two new organizations, l'Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne-français (A.C.J.C.) which like the previous groups was imported from Quebec and le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' which was the unique creation of a group of young French-Edmontonians.

The A.C.J.C. had been founded in Quebec in 1904 with the goal "d'opérer le groupement des jeunes Canadiens-français et de les préparer à une vie efficacement militante pour le bien de la religion et de la patrie".¹⁴ It was not until July, 1913 that the Association made an appearance in Edmonton when a large number of young French-speaking Edmontonians meeting at the Jesuit College where they were students decided to establish the basis for "un cercle d'études pour les jeunes gens de langue française d'Edmonton". The new group decided on the name of le Cercle Grandin and immediately sought affiliation with the national federation of l'Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne-français.¹⁵ The same year, 1913, also witnessed the creation

¹⁴Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 19 mars, 1924.

¹⁵Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 17 juillet, 1913.

of one of the most effective and long lasting groups in Edmonton, le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc'. Realizing the value of a dramatic association in terms of the preservation of the French language as well as the enjoyment to be extracted from it, a few of the city's young French-speaking men and women decided to form a group to produce theatrical presentations. The idea, largely the brain child of Alphonse Hervieux and Ulrich J. Blais, resulted in the production of the comedy "Les Crochets du Père Martin" in March, 1913 and numerous others in the following years.¹⁶

Although these groups were perhaps among the most important in the French-speaking community during these years they were by no means the only ones. Others included le Club National, founded to promote the material and moral interests of its members, especially the working class¹⁷, and l'Union Française de l'Alberta, an Edmonton based benevolent and friendship society.¹⁸ Yet with this proliferation of organizations in the years after 1905 there were those of the community who began to envisage a general organization of the entire French-speaking population either of Edmonton or Alberta as a whole. The idea was first expressed in two resolutions of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Association

¹⁶ Interview with J. Laurier Picard, October 22, 1970; Ibid., 27 mars, 1913.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15 mai, 1913.

¹⁸ Ibid., 31 juillet, 1913.

in May, 1909. One of these called for a communication to various groups relative to the foundation of a club by the federation of the French language societies of Edmonton, and the other proposed a congress of all the French-Canadians of the province on June 24, 1910.¹⁹ On that date, although the general congress was not held, a preliminary assembly took place during the celebration of Saint-Jean-Baptiste day at Rivière-qui-Barre and it set up an organizational committee to explore further action. This organizational committee included a list of officers to be chosen from the Edmonton Saint-Jean-Baptiste Association and two delegates from each Association of the Province.²⁰

The proposed general convention was well on its way to being organized and undoubtedly would eventually have been held had it not been for the appearance of a new society in 1911 that largely usurped its proposed role. This new organization, la Société du Parler Français, quickly gained the support of Edmonton's French-speaking community and became its most conspicuous manifestation of vitality and interest in the future. La Société du Parler Français au Canada had been founded in Quebec in June, 1902 to promote the French language and the interests of those who spoke it, but it was not until 1911 that an attempt was

¹⁹ Ibid., 20 mai, 1909.

²⁰ Ibid., 24 juin, 1910.

made to enroll western groups. At this' time a group was formed in Edmonton in order that it would be ready to participate in the proposed French language congress of all Canada's French-Canadians to be held at Quebec between June 24-30, 1912. The idea of this convention captured the imagination of the Edmonton community largely for two reasons; it was the first all-Canadian congress for the promotion of the French language, and one of its main objectives was the consolidation of all non-Quebec French groups in the protection of their language and educational rights.²¹ On January 27, 1912 a meeting was held in Edmonton to organize an assembly of all Alberta's French-Canadians to prepare for their participation in the Quebec convention. The entire elite of the community was present at this meeting and at subsequent ones that elected parish delegates to the general convention of Alberta held in Edmonton at the end of May, 1912. During this convention Wilfrid Gariépy was chosen as the delegate of Alberta's French-Canadians to the Quebec congress.²²

The enthusiastic reception that la Société du Parler Français met with in 1912 was intensified in the following two years. The annual convention for Alberta held at Edmonton quickly became the rival of Saint-Jean-Baptiste day

²¹Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1968), II, p. 620.

²²Le Progrès, 30 mai, 1912.

as the social event of the year. For instance, at the assembly of June 10-12, 1913 there were 800 delegates present and Henri Bourassa was the guest speaker.²³ It seems fairly likely that these annual conventions would have eventually led to some sort of formal association of all Alberta's French-Canadians had not the war intervened. Although this logical outcome did not occur, the Society itself continued to grow and expand in many directions. The first group of les Dames du Parler Français appeared in Immacualte Conception Parish in 1912, and in 1913 the Society opened an information bureau in Edmonton to promote French and Catholic colonization of Northern Alberta.²⁴

Before leaving the subject of French-speaking organizations in Edmonton during this period it might be well to examine briefly their significance in terms of the social life and the social structure of the community. Most obviously they accomplished a great deal in terms of sustaining the French-speaking presence in Edmonton and in strengthening social ties within the community itself. In addition they provided a very fertile field for the further development of the elite as leaders of the community. For example, nothing could be more elitist in outlook than the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Association's desire to find an honorary president

²³ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 19 juin, 1913.

²⁴ Ibid., 16 oct., 1913; Le Progrès, 27 juin, 1912.

who was "le Canadien-français de la Province ayant la position sociale le plus élevée". As a result a list of the officers of this organization and the equally important la Société du Parler Français reads like a social register. Here the oldest and most respected members of the community such as J. H. Gariépy and J. H. Picard lead the list with both having served as honorary presidents and directors of both organizations. They are closely followed as active officers by members of the clergy and by the politicians, professional men, and businessmen including among others Dr. Philippe Roy, Wilfrid Gariépy, P. E. Lessard, J.-L. Côté, Dr. A. Blais, Joseph-M. Déchène, H. Milton Martin, Lucien Dubuc, Adéodat Boileau, Louis Madore, and Leonidas Alcide Giroux. Finally, a study of the functioning of these various organizations shows the position of the Edmonton French-speaking community as a focal point of all the other French communities of the province. That the Edmonton community was the recognized leader was witnessed by the tendency of all groups, but more especially those such as la Société du Parler Français attempting to form provincial organizations, to organize with Edmonton as a headquarters and by the preponderant position and numbers of the members of the Edmonton community in these organizations.

One last aspect of the maintenance of a separate identity for the French-speaking community remains to be studied before turning to other considerations--the French

language press. The role that the weekly French language newspapers played at this time cannot be overemphasized. These journals, including among them Le Courrier de l'Ouest (September, 1905-January, 1916), Le Progrès [de Morinville] (March, 1909-December, 1913), and Le Progrès Albertain (January, 1914-June, 1915), provided as had their predecessor L'Ouest Canadien the medium which kept the French population aware of their separate existence and of the community's activities. In addition their editorials and articles made the reader aware of French and Catholic rights and of the threat to these rights. Again, as in so many other spheres of activity, it was the elite of the community who took upon themselves the often rather onerous task of publishing these papers. Le Courrier de l'Ouest was founded by Dr. Philippe Roy and P. E. Lessard while Le Progrès [de Morinville] and Le Progrès Albertain were founded by Omer St. Germain and Wilfrid Gariépy respectively.²⁵

It would perhaps appear from the foregoing study that the French-speaking residents of Edmonton were only concerned with maintaining and promoting their own ethnic interests in the life of the city. Such an impression would be erroneous since although they were definitely interested in retaining their identity they were also interested in promoting the best possible relations with the non-French-speaking population and in participating in the development, activities,

²⁵ Le Canadien Français, nov., 1916.

and social life of Edmonton as a whole. As the French-speaking community of Edmonton had been growing a basic philosophy had been evolving within it--that they were a community within a larger community. In such circumstances that which affected the larger community also affected the smaller and thus there was a need to be involved in all aspects of the city's life. Furthermore, the knowledge that ignorance of their hopes, customs, and ideals among the general population was the worst threat to their rights as French Catholics made them doubly anxious to be known and understood in the larger community. The attempts to bridge the gap between the English and French-speaking communities were not always easy owing to the presence of nationalists on both sides but largely through the efforts of the elite they were during this period for the most part successful.

One of the most effective means of bridging the gap between the French and English population was undoubtedly through the ties of marriage. Although the French-speaking Catholic clergy constantly warned against the dangers of marrying outside the French-speaking community because of their fear of the disappearance of the French language²⁶, marriage between French men and English women became fairly common, especially among the community's leaders. For example, several members of the elite of the community married the daughters of well-known Edmontonians. Dr. Philippe Roy

²⁶Interview with J. O. Pilon, November 2, 1970.

was married to Helen Young, the daughter of Harrison Young, one of the leading Hudson's Bay Company men in Edmonton, while H. Milton Martin and John C. Landry were married to Beatrice and Margaret Beck, the daughters of Judge N. D. Beck, a member of the Supreme Court of Alberta. Other members of the elite connected to English families included Adéodat Boileau who was married to Ethel Finn and L. A. Giroux who was married to Marie Shinnars.²⁷ The connections thus formed with these important families and in turn with their relatives were very important considerations in terms of eliciting good relations in general between the French and English communities.²⁸

Other areas where there was direct contact between the English and the French included the social life of Edmonton and activities connected with the Roman Catholic Church. Particularly among the earlier inhabitants of Edmonton there tended to be an active social exchange and some members of the French community attained exalted positions in "society" circles. For instance, the social position of J. H. Gariépy

²⁷Interviews with H. Milton Martin, November 12, 1970, Mrs. J. E. Hart, September 25, 1970, and J. O. Pilon, November 2, 1970.

²⁸Particularly interesting in terms of the connections formed by virtue of these marriages was the Roy-Young marriage. The Harrison Young family was related to many other influential families by the ties of marriage including the missionary McDougall family and through them the family of Lord Strathcona and the Loughheed family. Likewise Roy's daughter later married into the wealthy and influential Southam family.

is shown by those present among the 300 guests at a coming out party for his daughter Blanche in November, 1913. These included all the wives of the elite of the French-speaking community plus several wives of important men in the English community. Among them were Mrs. G. H. V. Bulyea, the wife of the Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta; Mrs. A. L. Sifton, the wife of the Premier of Alberta; Mrs. C. W. Cross, the wife of the Attorney-General of Alberta; Mrs. J. A. McDougall, the wife of one of Edmonton's earliest and most respected businessmen; Mrs. J. J. Anderson, the daughter of Frank Oliver and the wife of the managing director of Alberta Trusts Co. Ltd.; Mrs. T. H. Whitelaw, the wife of the city's chief medical health officer; Mrs. J. Wallbridge, the wife of one of Edmonton's most prominent lawyers; and Mrs. A. Norquay, the daughter-in-law of the former Premier of Manitoba John Norquay.²⁹ In return families such as the Gariépy's, Picards, Roys, Boileaus, and Martins were often present at social gatherings frequently held by some of the more well-known English families of Edmonton.

The activities associated with the Roman Catholic Church also provided an area where French and English-speaking Edmontonians could mingle and form friendships, particularly before the division of several parishes along ethnic lines. These activities included parish bazaars, picnics, and other social functions as well as the activities

²⁹ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 6 nov., 1913.

of several Church orientated organizations. Among the women the most popular of these was les Dames de l'Autel de Saint Joachim's whose membership was proportionately divided between English and French-speaking women parishoners. For example, in 1914 the list of officers included Mesdames J. H. Gariépy, Picard, W. Gariépy, Bérubé, Léger, Auger, Lévêque, Smith, Kennedy, Hart, Conway, Cashman, and Hefferman.³⁰ Among the men the major Church organization was the Knights of Columbus and as in the case of the women's group the membership was fairly evenly divided at first. The Edmonton Council of the Knights of Columbus, No. 1184, was installed on January 5, 1907 and H. Milton Martin and Lucien Dubuc were among its original officers.³¹

Although the foregoing areas of social contact were important in breaking down the barriers between the two communities, it was perhaps through the contact of French and English in professional and business affairs that the greatest strides in relations were made. During the period from 1905 to 1914 Edmonton experienced one of the greatest booms in its history and the opportunity was present for the members of the French-speaking community to share to the fullest in its benefits. In doing so they again worked from the philosophy of being a community within a larger community. In other words, on one hand they were concerned

³⁰ Le Progrès Albertain, 5 fév., 1914.

³¹ Maclean, p. 137.

with building a strong ethnic base for their professional and business undertakings. This was done through the formation of associations and partnerships among members of the French-speaking community in ventures extending from law firms, to large financial corporations, to small retail merchants. On the other hand, they were interested in the economic life of the city as a whole and participated in professional and business activities involving the leading business and professional men of the entire city. Obviously then it was recognized that associations of French-speaking people were important and were to form the core of their economic activity but that they could only be successful if the urban community as a whole was successful. An examination of the French-speaking community's participation in the economic life of the city during this period will show how really involved they were and consequently how this helped to break down the barriers between the French and English.

In the professional world the French-Canadians of Quebec had traditionally received their training in the law and medical professions. This tradition had been brought to the West and since most French-Edmontonians with post-secondary education had received it in Quebec universities there were a fairly large number of men in the community involved in these two professions. Particularly in the legal profession the community was well represented both in firms that were composed entirely of French-speaking lawyers and

in larger English-speaking firms. For example, of the twenty law firms listed in Edmonton in 1907 French-speaking lawyers were senior partners in five of them and many of them continued to hold their positions among the city's foremost lawyers even when the number of firms had increased to forty-seven in 1912.³² Among the most prominent French lawyers in Edmonton during these years were Wilfrid Gariépy, Hector and John Landry, Louis Madore, Lucien Dubuc, and L. A. Giroux. Also included was J. Camelien Noël whose abilities were recognized in his appointment to the Bench. Noël had received his legal training in Quebec and from 1901 to 1906 had practised law in the Yukon before coming to Edmonton. In 1907 he was named judge of the district of Wetaskiwin and in 1909 was transferred to the district of Athabaska, an area so vast that he was required to travel over 1,500 miles in each circuit of the district's courts.³³ Noël became a member of the Supreme Court of Alberta in April, 1916³⁴ and served effectively in this position until his death in March, 1920.

The medical profession was likewise well represented in the French-speaking community. Perhaps the most successful among the French-speaking doctors was Dr. Aristide Blais

³²Henderson's Edmonton Directory 1907 and 1912.

³³Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 24 mars, 1920; Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 13 juillet, 1911.

³⁴Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 6 avril, 1916.

who had the largest clientele of any doctor in Edmonton at this time. Blais had graduated in 1899 from the medical school of Laval University and had subsequently done two years of internship at l'Hôpital Paen in Paris. During 1901 he arrived in Edmonton and began building up a practice while at the same time attempting to remain abreast of the latest surgical techniques. His study led him to the Mayo Brothers Institute in Rochester, Minnesota in 1910 and back to Paris for further post-graduate work in 1911. The knowledge that he gained as a result of these intensive investigations into new methods soon earned him a reputation as one of the most eminent surgeons in the country.³⁵ There were, of course, numerous other successful French-speaking doctors in Edmonton involved in the many facets of the medical profession. In general practice these included Drs. Philip Quesnel, R. de Lotbinière-Harwood, Joseph Boulanger, J. E. Amyot, and J. Sabourin. Also there were Drs. A. C. de Lotbinière-Harwood and J. H. Lamarre in dentistry and S. Frenette and R. Grignon in veterinary medicine.

Although they were well represented in the foregoing professions, the great majority of Edmonton's French population were engaged in some sort of business activity. These ran the whole spectrum from high finance to the small

³⁵ John Blue, Alberta, Past and Present (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1924), II, pp. 342-43; Le Courrier l'Ouest, 21 juillet, 1910.

independent type of businesses that many of the original French-speaking Edmontonians had engaged in. Since the period was generally one of boom conditions there were opportunities in a number of fields and the more astute businessmen of the community became involved in a variety of different areas.

Above all the period was one of great speculation in real estate and land development largely due to the rapid expansion of the city and the annexation of Strathcona and North Edmonton in 1912. The extent to which the interest of speculators was awakened in the possibilities of the situation is shown by the fact that at the height of the boom in 1912 there was an unbelievable 336 companies or individual agents engaged in real estate as compared to 75 in 1907.³⁶ Many of Edmonton's French-speaking financial leaders took advantage of the boom in land to become involved in competition with the hundreds of other speculators. One of the most prominent among them was René Lemarchand who by his foresight and careful manipulation became a millionaire and one of the richest men in Edmonton at this time. Lemarchand was a native of Sarthe, France and had worked in Paris before deciding to try his luck elsewhere. Through contacts with his brother Father Alphonse Lemarchand, O.M.I., he learned of the great opportunities in the Canadian West and decided to

³⁶Henderson's Edmonton Directory 1907 and 1912.

come to Edmonton. Upon his arrival he immediately began to speculate in land with his own money and additional capital that he had borrowed in France.³⁷ Through adroit management and investment success followed upon success and by 1909 Lemarchand had decided to engage in a fantastic undertaking, the construction of the first major apartment building in Edmonton. As originally conceived the building, known as the Lemarchand Mansion, would contain forty-three apartments varying from two to seven rooms; would have electric lighting, steam heat, elevators, and gas cooking apparatus; and would cost about \$125,000.³⁸ The building was constructed by Charles May in a basically French classical style and eventually cost considerably more than expected but it remains even today as a monument to the foresight and business astuteness of its builder. Lemarchand, although he spent a good deal of time in France, maintained his contacts with Edmonton's French-speaking community until his death in 1921.³⁹

Obviously with the great degree of success Lemarchand achieved he was the dean of the real estate speculators of the day but he was by no means the only member of the French community involved in this often lucrative business. Another member of the community, H. Milton Martin,

³⁷ Donatien Fremont, Les Francais Dans l'Ouest Canadien (Winnipeg: Editions de la Liberté, 1959), p. 136.

³⁸ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 20 mai, 1909.

³⁹ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 1 juin, 1921.

was as optimistic as Lemarchand and often worked in close cooperation with him in business ventures. Martin was born at Clintonville, New York on June 6, 1872 and attended the Plateau Academy of Montreal and Joliette College at Joliette, Quebec. From here he went on to Vancouver where he worked as a clerk between 1887 and 1890 and then engaged in other activities ranging from assistant paymaster for the Columbia and Kootenay Railroad to mining in the Kootenay district between 1890 and 1897. After 1898 he worked for the government until he came to Edmonton to establish himself permanently in 1906.⁴⁰ Immediately after arriving his interest in the area was awakened when he envisaged its possibilities for development and henceforth he turned most of his attention to speculation and land sales through his own real estate company. Particularly in company with Lemarchand he engaged in numerous profitable enterprises in Edmonton and in 1911 took part with him in a very successful land development in Camrose. His spirit of enterprise in helping to develop Edmonton was recognized in his election as President of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce in 1912, a position which the French language press held up as an example of what could be achieved by a member of the community if sufficient effort were made.⁴¹

⁴⁰Blue, pp. 251-52; Interview with H. Milton Martin, November 12, 1970.

⁴¹Le Progrès, 1 fév., 1912.

Many other individuals and groups of French-speaking Edmontonians took part in the real estate boom of the pre-war period but perhaps none more effectively than those involved in Imperial Agencies. The company was composed of three well-known French-Canadians recognized both in the French community and the business community of the city as a whole. The president of the company was P. E. Lessard who possessed wide political as well as business contacts while Adéodat Boileau, formerly secretary of Le Courrier de l'Ouest and an organizer of the Edmonton Ad Club, was managing director. The company's secretary was Leo Savard, formerly an employee of the Land Office. Although the company was interested in loans and insurance as well as real estate during this period its main function was as a land agency. It developed and sold land in many areas both inside and outside Edmonton including lots at Coal Point near Fallis and at Fort McMurray.⁴²

Corresponding with the keen interest in land development and real estate in Edmonton during the boom, there was also a significant rise in interest in the growth of industry and the development of natural resources. Business undertakings in these areas required large amounts of capital and some amount of risk, but many members of the French community and especially the financial leaders were in the forefront

⁴²Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 29 janv., 1914 and 9 mars, 1911.

of those involved in several endeavors. Of course, in most of these instances they were part of groups of investors which included the leading financiers of the city and the province as a whole.

Particular interest seems to have been paid to the development of the natural resources in Edmonton and its surrounding hinterland. As early as 1907 a company known as Western Timber and Mines was developing mining and timber interests forty miles upstream from Edmonton. Involved in this enterprise were Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea and W. S. Hefferman of the Bank of Commerce as well as J. H. Gariépy, J. H. Picard and P. E. Lessard, of whom the latter two were on the board of directors.⁴³ Another scheme undertaken on a fairly large scale was the Elk Park Oil Company formed in 1908. The company was created with the intention of buying, developing, and selling the promising gas and oil terrain near Morinville and its directors included Charles May as president, P. E. Lessard as vice-president, and Leo Savard as secretary. It was quite a large enterprise for the period when oil was still very much in the speculative stage with the original capital being around \$200,000.⁴⁴

In the field of industrial development two enterprises, the Edmonton Portland Cement Company and the Great

⁴³Ibid., 13 juin, 1907.

⁴⁴Ibid., 18 juin, 1908.

Northern Tannery seem to have received the majority of the attention of the French-speaking investors. The Edmonton Portland Cement Company, located at Malborough 130 miles west of Edmonton, had Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea as its president and J. H. Gariépy as one of its directors, a fact that undoubtedly induced many members of the community to invest rather heavily in the enterprise. J. H. Gariépy, J. H. Picard, and Stanislas LaRue each owned \$10,000 worth of shares while others including P. E. Lessard, René Lemarchand, and Dr. A. Blais also owned substantial amounts.⁴⁵ At first this company was relatively successful but unfortunately, like many ventures during the boom, it eventually went bankrupt and almost completely destroyed the fortunes of many people including J. H. Gariépy and J. H. Picard.⁴⁶ The other large enterprise, the Great Northern Tannery, was much more successful. It was begun in October, 1911 with some of the most influential businessmen of the city involved including Bulyea, D. R. Fraser, W. H. Clarke, Richard Secord, and the Calgarian Pat Burns. Notable French-speaking Edmontonians participating were H. Milton Martin who by 1914 had become the managing director of the company, P. E. Lessard, Georges Roy, J. N. Pomerlau, Stanislas LaRue, J. E. Laurencelle, Leo Savard, and Joseph Beauchamp.⁴⁷ There were of

⁴⁵Ibid., 2 nov., 1911.

⁴⁶Interview with A.-M. Déchène, September 29, 1970.

⁴⁷Le Progrès Albertain, 29 janv., 1914; Le Courrier l'Ouest, 9 oct., 1911.

course other enterprises which individual members of the community invested in but generally speaking the majority of them could not afford to invest on a large scale and therefore tended to follow the example of their financial leaders in their investments.

Although members of the French-speaking community were involved in these large scale land, resource, and industrial developments, most of their number were quite naturally involved in smaller scale business undertakings. These included various areas of endeavor but there was a tendency toward two in particular, the hotel business and retail merchandising. The hotel business in Edmonton developed apace with the increasing size and importance of the city, expanding from twenty establishments in 1907 to thirty-six in 1912.⁴⁸ In terms of French participation this aspect of the business life of the city is interesting since they were involved in it to a very high degree. During the period at least nine hotels were owned or operated by members of the community. These included the Richelieu Hotel of J. N. Pomerlau, the Cecil Hotel of C. H. Belanger, the Queen's Hotel of Bertha Héту, the Hotel Internationale of Joseph Beauchamp, the Strathcona House of J. P. Belanger, the Brunswick Hotel of E. Bourassa, the Hotel Savoy of Hector W. Chevrier, the Corona Hotel managed by L. Arsenault, and the Jasper Hotel of Brouard and Mireault. The preponderant

⁴⁸Henderson's Edmonton Director 1907 and 1912.

position of the French community in this business was recognized in the election of C. H. Belanger as President of the Hotel Keepers Association of Alberta in 1911 and 1912 and in the appointment of Joseph Beauchamp as one of its directors in 1912.⁴⁹

It was, however, retail merchandising which traditionally attracted the largest number of the community. Following the examples of the earliest arrivals in Edmonton such as LaRue, Picard, Gariépy, and Chenier small merchants in a variety of fields multiplied in the years between 1905 and 1914. There was a tendency toward grocery and general merchandise stores such as the Épicerie A. B. Côté and the 99¢ Store of Alfred Déchène and Joseph Duhamel but there was also shops and stores of many other kinds. These included the Bon Marché for women's clothes; the tobacco shops of J.-M. Déchène, J. A. McNeil, and R. Belanger; the Pharmacie Laval of T. E. Gagner, "la seule pharmacie Canadien-français de la ville"; and the tailoring businesses of L. V. Laporte, O. Lanctot, and La Fleche Frères.

Beyond the foregoing areas of professional and business affairs it is needless to list all the various modes of employment of members of the French-speaking community. Many of them were employed with the government, the Land Office seeming to be the favorite branch, and as agents and employees of various large English-speaking firms. Others

⁴⁹Le Progrès, 1 fév., 1912.

who wished to be able to use French in their daily jobs were either employees of the small businesses owned by members of the community or of larger institutions such as Revillon Frères, an international fur and hardware company, or the Banque d'Hochelaga. This institution, which in 1924 became part of the Banque Canadienne Nationale, was a branch of a Quebec owned banking association founded in 1874 and tended to act as a financial center for Edmonton's French community. It was managed by Charles E. Barry until 1909 when Alex Lefort took over the position.⁵⁰

It is obvious from the foregoing that the French community's involvement in the professional and business affairs of the city served the double purpose of creating an identifiable French-speaking business community on one hand and of helping to promote good relations between French and English on the other. Through daily contact the two groups got to know and understand each other better and consequently to be somewhat more open minded in other areas of contact. The elite was particularly valuable in the promotion of these relations because of their wide professional and business contacts with "important" Edmontonians. Similarly the elite's position as political leaders of the community offered another area in which their involvement could serve a double purpose. But since the community's

⁵⁰La Survivance, 31 janv., 1934.

participation in politics was so great and so important during these years it would be wise to deal with it and other related fields in a separate section.

CHAPTER V

COMMUNITY WITHIN A COMMUNITY 1905-1914:

POLITICS, COLONIZATION, AND

EDUCATION

Involvement in political activity for the French-speaking people of Canada had traditionally been one of their most effective weapons in the battle to uphold their cultural, linguistic, and religious rights. The French-speaking community of Edmonton had attempted to maintain this tradition prior to 1905 especially in the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories. Although they had not been numerous enough to have a French-speaking representative in Edmonton itself, they had taken an active part in the political activities of Saint Albert constituency, and two prominent members of the Edmonton community, Antonio Prince and Frederic Villeneuve, had effectively served as representatives of that constituency. Also J. H. Picard had throughout the period represented the interests of the community on the Town Council of Edmonton. But the years between 1905 and 1914, with the creation of the City of Edmonton in 1904 and the Province of Alberta in 1905, represented an era very different from the preceding one. Especially in the Provincial Legislature with the beginning of party politics the community's leaders realized that total involvement was

necessary if the rights granted to French Catholics in the Autonomy Acts were to be maintained. At the same time it was realized that in all spheres of political activity a further opportunity was present to promote understanding and good relations between the French and English. Again, as in so many other fields of endeavor, the community looked to their elite to guide and represent them in these political activities.

In terms of civic representation, the community was anxious to retain at least one French-speaking alderman on the City Council at all times. For the most part they were successful in doing so. J. H. Picard continued his string of victories which extended as far back as 1893 up until 1907 when he decided to run for mayor. He was definitely well qualified to serve in the position with his long record of achievement in business and as a town councillor and member of the Board of Trade, but he lost the election to the twenty-seven year old W. A. Griesbach.¹ However, his position on City Council was filled by the young lawyer Wilfrid Gariépy who in the subsequent election of 1908 topped the polls with 1,456 votes.² Gariépy remained as an alderman until 1910 when he left the civic field to devote himself entirely to the pursuit of a career in provincial politics, and for the next few years there were no French-

¹Interview with J. Laurier Picard, October 22, 1970.

²Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 17 déc., 1908.

speaking representatives on City Council. This situation was deplored in the community and was finally remedied in 1914 with the return of J. H. Picard to civic politics as a successful aldermanic candidate.³ Picard remained a part of City Council until his final retirement in 1917 when his position as the community's representative was then taken over by H. Milton Martin who served until 1920.⁴

Although the maintenance of civic representation was undoubtedly an important consideration in the French-speaking community, it palled in the face of the desire for representation in the Provincial Legislature. Much as in the case of its predecessor, the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories, it was realized by the members of the community that it was here more than in any other arena of politics that representation was needed to protect and work for the extension of their rights. To a great degree the pattern which had been established in the earlier period was also followed in these years with a tendency for predominantly French-speaking rural constituencies to elect members of the elite of the Edmonton community as their representatives in the Legislature. Because of the success of these men in representing the interests of French-speaking Albertans and the involvement of the entire community in all aspects of politics this period marked the

³Ibid., 17 déc., 1914.

⁴Interview with H. Milton Martin, November 12, 1970.

apogee of the political history of the community.

Political activity in the area composing Alberta prior to 1905 was essentially of a non-partisan nature, but with the creation of the province loyalty to one of the two traditional Canadian parties, the Liberals or the Conservatives, became the norm.⁵ That the Liberals formed the first government under the premiership of A. C. Rutherford was due mainly to the fact that it had been Laurier's Liberal government in Ottawa which had created the Province. For their part the French-speaking community of Edmonton and of Alberta as a whole were from the outset predominantly staunch supporters of this provincial Liberal government. This stemmed basically from a feeling that the Liberals would best maintain their rights and from loyalty to Laurier both as a French-Canadian and as a supporter of their position in the Manitoba schools controversy and the Autonomy Bills. Further strength was lent to this support by their astute realization that the best way to maintain their rights was through identification with the strongest party, which the Liberals undoubtedly were. In return for this unbending support the community expected the government to include one of their number in the provincial cabinet, a stipulation which the Liberals were apparently willing to accept. In fact in some instances verbal promises were made to the

⁵L. G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), pp. 3-21.

effect that they would be allowed this cabinet representative⁶ and during the period two such appointments were made, P. E. Lessard in the Rutherford Cabinet and Wilfrid Gariépy in the Sifton Cabinet.

In the first provincial election held on November 9, 1905 there were no French-speaking members elected but beginning in 1909 with the election of P. E. Lessard and Lucien Boudreau they became an increasing element in the Legislature. Their representation reached its peak in the election of April, 1913 when five of them gained seats in a fifty-six seat house. The five, all Liberals, were P. E. Lessard in Saint Paul, Wilfrid Gariépy in Beaver River, Jean-L. Côté in Grouard, Lucien Boudreau in Saint Albert, and James G. Turgeon in Ribstone.⁷ Although these men represented various rather far flung constituencies in Northern Alberta they were all actively involved in Edmonton's French-speaking community and three of them, Lessard, Gariépy, and Côté, made Edmonton their permanent home.

The dean of the French-speaking representatives in the Legislature was Prosper Edmond Lessard, one of the first two to be elected in 1909 and the first to obtain a position in the cabinet. Lessard was born in Cranbourne, Dorchester County, Quebec on February 3, 1873 and after an education in the public schools entered the College du Mont Saint Louis

⁶ Ibid., p. 143; Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 4 août, 1913.

⁷ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 17 avril, 1913.

of Montreal. Upon completion of a commercial and scientific course he worked as a bookkeeper in a mercantile house until 1898 when he headed West with numerous others bound for the Klondike gold rush. When he arrived in Edmonton he found employment as a bookkeeper with Gariépy and Chenier and after four years bought a half share in the company thereafter known as Gariépy and Lessard. This business was carried on until 1910 when the partners sold out and Lessard went into the real estate, insurance, and loan field as the president of Imperial Agencies.⁸

From the time of his arrival in Edmonton Lessard was intensely interested in the affairs of the city and subsequently in the creation of the provincial Liberal party. On the eve of his election in Pakan constituency (Saint-Paul-des-Métis district) on March 15, 1909 he had been an active member of the Edmonton Board of Trade for seven years, a director of the same organization for two years, and a trustee of the Separate School Board for four years.⁹ Similarly he was deeply involved in the Alberta Liberal Party first of all in his capacity as managing director of the French language Liberal organ Le Courrier de l'Ouest in 1905 and later on in his position as president of the Edmonton branch of the Alberta Liberal Association and president of the Liberal Association for the federal district of Edmonton.¹⁰ These

⁸Blue, II, p. 19.

⁹Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 25 fév., 1909.

¹⁰Ibid.

qualifications provided Premier Rutherford with a man who was not only well qualified to fill a cabinet position but who also represented the French-speaking sector of the electorate. As a result Lessard did not have to wait long after his election to be taken into the government's inner councils, becoming Minister without Portfolio in October, 1909.¹¹

Unfortunately for Lessard he was taken into the cabinet on the eve of the crisis over the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway with the result that his term as minister was both rather turbulent and short lived. Rutherford and his cabinet resigned on May 26, 1910 and the new Premier, A. L. Sifton, included only one of the former ministers, Duncan Marshall, in the cabinet he announced on June 1.¹² Generally speaking the French community did not feel the Rutherford Government was guilty of any impropriety in the A. & G. W. affair, and that Lessard personally continued to be one of its most popular politicians was witnessed by his re-election in April, 1913 in the Saint Paul constituency.

The election of 1913 also marked the first success in provincial politics for the man who was to be the heir to Lessard as the French-speaking representative in the cabinet, Wilfrid Gariépy. Gariépy was born in Montreal on March 14, 1877 and in 1893 came to Edmonton with his father J. H. Gariépy. He worked in his father's business for a short

¹¹Ibid., 21 oct., 1909.

¹²L. G. Thomas, pp. 89-90.

time and then returned to study in the East, graduating in law from McGill University in 1903. Upon his return to Edmonton he became a part of the law firm of Taylor, Boyle and Gariépy where he remained until 1907 when he formed the new French-speaking firm of Gariépy, Landry and Landry.¹³ This partnership in turn was dissolved in 1911 and Gariépy joined with fellow Liberal L. A. Giroux to form the firm of Gariépy and Giroux.¹⁴ Prior to his election to the Provincial Legislature his experience in public life consisted of being an alderman of Edmonton between 1907 and 1910, a Separate School trustee from 1904 onward, president of the Union of Municipalities of Alberta in 1904, and president of the Liberal Club of Edmonton in 1912.¹⁵

Gariépy had first attempted to break into provincial politics in the election of 1909 as a representative for the constituency of Saint Albert but as a lawyer from outside the area he lost the Liberal nomination to Lucien Boudreau, the former-Mayor of Saint Albert.¹⁶ He then decided to contest the election as an Independent Liberal and although he campaigned vigorously he lost to Boudreau. Undaunted, in the following years he attempted to become more well-known among the French-speaking population particularly through

¹³ MacRae, II, p. 735.

¹⁴ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 2 nov., 1911.

¹⁵ Ibid., 20 mars, 1913.

¹⁶ Ibid., 4 and 11 mars, 1909.

the medium of his newspaper Le Progrès [de Morinville] which was edited and directed by Omer St. Germain. This newspaper, like Le Courrier de l'Ouest, was staunchly Liberal in outlook and tended to view the political questions of the day in much the same terms as its sister paper. Gariépy finally succeeded in being elected as the member for Beaver River in the election of April 17, 1913 and subsequently moved the paper, under the new title of Le Progrès Albertain, from Morinville to Edmonton with the intention of making it an organ to promote French-speaking colonization to all parts of Alberta.¹⁷ With Gariépy's election Premier Sifton was provided with a man with suitable experience in public affairs to qualify for a cabinet position. Finally in December, 1913 Sifton, heeding the importunities of the French language press and fulfilling an election promise, appointed him Minister of Municipal Affairs.¹⁸

A third member of Edmonton's French-speaking community who made his appearance on the political scene during this period but whose greatest successes in politics remained for the future was Jean-Leon Côté. Côté was born on May 6, 1867 at Éboulements, Charlevoix County, Quebec and studied at l'Academie Commerciale de Montmagny. In 1893 he came West to work for the Department of the Interior as a surveyor and remained in the government's employ until 1900

¹⁷ Le Progrès Albertain, 26 fév., 1914.

¹⁸ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 4 déc., 1913.

when he became the president of the Edmonton based engineering and surveying firm of Côté, Smith, Côté, Tremblay and Pearson.¹⁹ From 1900 onward Côté's firm obtained contracts from the federal government for surveys in the northern part of the province, mostly around Athabaska Landing. In July, 1909 because of his familiarity with the area and his interest in improving it he decided to run as the Liberal candidate in the bye-election for the constituency of Athabaska. His platform consisted of a demand for roads and railroads in the area, especially a railroad from Edmonton to Lesser Slave Lake, and a demand for an amendment to the rules for improvements on homesteads in wooded areas. The result of the election gave Côté a majority of eighty-one votes over his Conservative opponent and he consequently joined Lucien Boudreau and P. E. Lessard as French-speaking members in the Legislature.²⁰

Although these elected representatives in the Provincial Legislature were undoubtedly political leaders of Edmonton's French-speaking community, they were by no means the only members of the elite involved in politics. Perhaps the dominant political personality of the period, over and above the provincial representatives, was Senator Dr. Philippe Roy. Roy had been born February 13, 1868 at Saint François, Montmagny County, Quebec and had studied at the

¹⁹ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 22 août, 1923.

²⁰ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 29 juillet and 5 août, 1909.

College Ste.-Anne de la Pocatière and at Laval University from which he obtained his doctorate in medicine. Hearing of the Klondike gold rush, in 1898 he had come West with the intention of going to the Yukon but upon reaching Edmonton decided to set up practice rather than continuing on. Immediately he became interested in politics and took an active part in the organization of the Liberal Party of Alberta. For this he was rewarded by Laurier with the appointment of senator representing Northern Alberta at the time of the inauguration of the Province of Alberta in September, 1905.²¹

The prestige which Roy's position carried with it resulted in him being the most respected and most important personality in Edmonton's French-speaking community. Fortunately Roy realized the extent of his influence and attempted to use it to good advantage. He felt that it was his duty to make the people of the community aware of the need for positive political action to gain and protect their rights and at the same time to make them aware that cooperation with other elements of the population was necessary in this political action. This idea was perhaps best expressed by Roy in a speech to the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society in 1907 when he was chosen as honorary president:

Le moyen, messieurs, de donner de la force et du prestige à l'idée française dans cette province, de donner de la popularité à nos idées vraiment généreuses,

²¹Ibid., 4 mai, 1911.

c'est de fréquenter d'avantage les autres éléments de notre population et de leur faire comprendre que nous nous intéressons autant qu'eux à la bonne administration des affaires de notre pays.

Messieurs, nous avons a Edmonton deux grandes associations politiques bien organisées, l'une conservatrice, l'autre libérale. Si vous voulez m'en croire, tous, ou au moins ceux qui sont électeurs, devraient être membres actifs de l'une ou de l'autre de ces associations.

C'est en fréquentant ces réunions, en prenant part activement, sérieusement aux discussions intéressants de l'interêt public que nous arriverons sûrement et sans friction à faire adopter nos idées.²²

Although the foregoing speech indicates that Roy was interested in defending the rights of the French-speaking community through political action regardless of party, he, as previously mentioned, was a confirmed Liberal. Beyond his activity in the creation of the Alberta Liberal Party he also initiated the French language organ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, whose first edition stated that the weekly had been created to defend, if necessary, the Franco-Albertan's political, economic, and religious interests.²³ These interests were for Roy inseparable from the tenets of the Liberal party and throughout its ten years of existence the paper gave unfailing support to both the federal and provincial Liberals and bitterly attacked their opponents. It became especially caustic in its attacks on the Conservatives in the period after the election of Robert Borden and his government in September, 1911, the election which in the eyes of the paper

²² Ibid., 11 juillet, 1907.

²³ Ibid., 14 oct. 1905.

saw the incomprehensible defeat of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.²⁴ It is interesting to note in passing that this election witnessed one occasion when the French-speaking community of Edmonton viewed the issues involved in different terms than their brethren in Quebec. Le Courrier de l'Ouest indicates that the community felt that the main issue was reciprocity with the United States while in Quebec the election was fought on the question of Laurier's Navy Act.²⁵

Senator Roy remained the representative for Northern Alberta in the Senate until May, 1911 when he was named by the federal government to the post of Commissioner-General of Canada in Paris. Later he received further prestigious positions as he was appointed Canadian representative at the Fifth International Labor Conference held in Geneva in October, 1925²⁶ and was appointed to the Privy Council in February, 1926²⁷. From the time of his appointment as Commissioner-General he was but rarely able to return to Edmonton although he still maintained an active interest in the French-speaking community and the city's affairs.

Other members of the elite of the community, although holding no official political office, were also continually involved in political activity, especially in the capacity of participants in party organizations. Many of these were

²⁴ Ibid., 21 sept., 1911.

²⁵ Ibid., 10 août, 1911.

²⁶ Wade, II, p. 796.

²⁷ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 17 fév., 1926.

such long established residents of Edmonton as J. H. Picard and J. H. Gariépy but they also included younger and more recent arrivals such as H. Milton Martin and Joseph-M. Déchène. Because of his unceasing energy in work on behalf of the Liberals Martin was elected president of the Edmonton Association of Liberals in 1911 while Déchène's contribution to the party was recognized in his election as vice-president of the Central Committee of the Liberal Association of Edmonton in 1914.²⁸ However, the French-speaking community did not remain content with representation in Liberal organizations on a provincial and local basis as in 1910 several of the elite decided upon the creation of a political organization to represent the French-speaking community as a separate entity. The organization of le Club Laurier began in March, 1910 and it was hoped that in time all Liberal societies in the French-speaking centers of Alberta could be induced to affiliate in a general organization. The first officers of le Club Laurier included Senator Roy as honorary president; P. E. Lessard, J.-L. Côté, and L. Boudreau as honorary vice-presidents; J. H. Picard as president; Dr. A. Blais as vice-president; Major DeBlois Thibaudeau as secretary; and H. Milton Martin, Wilfrid Gariépy, Leo Savard, J. E. Theriault, Stanislas LaRue, Louis Madore, and Joseph Beauchamp as an executive committee.²⁹

²⁸ Le Progrès Albertain, 26 fév., 1914.

²⁹ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 3 mars, 1910.

Although it is obvious that the largest proportion of the French-speaking community were Liberals, there was also a small hard core of French Conservatives present in Edmonton during these years. One of the most prominent of these was Adéodat Boileau. Boileau was born in Quebec in 1885 and in 1905 came with his father François-Xavier Boileau, a former Papal Zouave, to establish himself in Alberta. The family had at first lived near Duvernay but in October they came to Edmonton where François-Xavier helped Senator Roy and P. E. Lessard found Le Courrier de l'Ouest. Since his father was the editor of the newspaper Adéodat was given the job of administrator which he held until 1909 when he left to join with P. E. Lessard in Imperial Agencies.³⁰ Although his father and many of his friends were strong Liberals, Adéodat chose to support the Conservatives and as he gravitated to a position among the elite of the community he became one of the few bulwarks of that party among the French-speaking population. There were a few others who originally joined with him in supporting the Conservatives including Hector Landry who was the second vice-president of the Conservative Association of Edmonton and was elected vice-president of the provincial Conservative party in 1907.³¹ After the election of the Borden Government in September, 1911 support for the Conservatives became much more apparent

³⁰ Interview with Mrs. J. E. Hart, September 25, 1970; La Survivance, 2 nov., 1932.

³¹ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 6 juin, and 11 juillet, 1907.

among members of the community and in December they formed a counterpart of le Club Laurier in le Club Conservateur Canadien-Français. The first officers of this group included Octave Derome as president; J. N. Pomerlau as vice-president; Adéodat Boileau as secretary-treasurer; and Dr. R. de Lotbinière-Harwood, Jules Roy, A. C. Larivière, A. Denis, H. A. Mackie, and J. Prefontaine as an executive committee.³² Even after this drawing of party lines in the community, the French-speaking Liberals remained by far the most active and most successful of the two parties. The French-speaking Conservatives undoubtedly realized the virtual impossibility of breaking the Liberal hold over Franco-Albertans and for the most part shied away from direct electoral confrontation. The only French-speaking Conservative actually to contend a seat during the whole period from 1905 to 1914 was Hector Landry who in the April 17, 1913 election lost by a substantial margin to Lucien Boudreau in Saint Albert constituency.³³

As previously mentioned, the period from 1905 to the outbreak of World War I was not one of any great difficulty in terms of the community's attempts to protect their rights. The French-speaking politicians were numerous and influential enough to help prevent any problems from arising, and on its part the government realized that nothing was to be gained from resurrecting any schools, language, or religious

³²Ibid., 28 déc., 1911.

³³Edmonton Bulletin, April 18, 1913.

questions. Thus with a feeling of security on the political front much of the community's attention turned to other means of ensuring their ethnic survival. For the most part during these years this involved their participation in the continued promotion of French-speaking Catholic colonization efforts and participation in matters dealing with education. Their large measure of success in these two fields was a further contribution to making this period one of the most notable in the entire history of Edmonton's French-speaking community.

The first of these two areas of concern, colonization, became increasingly more important in the years after 1905 with the veritable flood of immigrants coming in to take up the choice lands of the newly created province. The reasons for the great influx, particularly in the decade between 1900 and 1910, were that in contrast to the previous decade the precipitation was less variable, the prices for wheat were good, and railways were being built on an extensive scale.³⁴ In terms of the Edmonton area the arrival of the Canadian Northern in the city in 1905 followed by the Grand Trunk Pacific in 1909 was a particularly important consideration. Yet with these new railroads bringing in carloads of new settlers of all ethnic origins almost daily,

³⁴ Arthur S. Morton and Chester Martin, History of Prairie Settlement and "Dominion Lands" Policy, Vol. II of Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, ed. by W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (9 vols.; Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1934-40), p. 119.

the problem of making sure a goodly proportion of them were French-speaking became particularly acute. As a result the elite of the French-speaking community of Edmonton felt the necessity to take a leading role in promoting colonization. This was accomplished through the work of the clergy, prominent citizens, the press, and a colonization organization.

The French-speaking clergy had been the original instigators of French Catholic colonization in the West and during the years 1905 to 1914 they remained the primary agents of promotion and organization. As in the past they worked mainly as missionnaires-colonisateurs attached to the Canadian Immigration Bureau at Montreal. Until 1912 the colonization priest for the Edmonton area was Reverend Father J. A. Ouellette whose functions included the organization of railway transportation for French-Canadians from Quebec and the eastern United States to the Edmonton area and the distribution of information such as the brochure L'Alberta Centrale on opportunities for settlement in the province.³⁵ When Ouellette was recalled to Edmonton in 1912 to become the curé of Immaculate Conception Parish he was replaced in Montreal by Reverend Father J. A. Ethier. Ethier, immediately upon taking up his duties, went to New England with Reverend Father Giroux, O.M.I., where they achieved a large measure of success among expatriate French-

³⁵ Le Progrès, 1 juin, 1911; Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 8 sept, 1910 and 26 janv., 1911.

Canadians. In fact Le Courrier de l'Ouest reported in May, 1913 that the town of Whitinsville thirty miles from Boston had overnight become virtually deserted with the departure of three hundred persons, all originally French-Canadians, for Alberta.³⁶ The high degree of success that these priests were able to achieve during this period stems largely from the increased funds which were at their disposal. Previously money to finance their work had come from diverse sources including the Church, the government, and private donations but during this period the railroads added a further source of income. With two competing railways vying for passengers to the West the companies were quite willing to pay so much per head to the priests for each passenger that travelled over their particular line. The priests in turn were quite willing to accept these payments in order to help defray the costs of expanded colonization work.³⁷

The work of the clergy in colonization was ably seconded by the personal efforts of members of the elite of the community. Some of them took upon themselves the task of increasing French-speaking immigration by promoting the Edmonton area in the course of their travels to Quebec, the eastern United States, and France. For example, in July, 1908 René Lemarchand returned from a seven month visit to France with twenty-nine persons wishing to settle in

³⁶ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 22 mai, 1913.

³⁷ Interview with Father Ludovic LaRose, O.M.I., October 1, 1970.

Edmonton³⁸, and in January, 1909 Senator Roy departed for France and Belgium to attempt to interest potential immigrants in the Canadian West³⁹. Likewise, the personal efforts of Roy and Wilfrid Gariépy were furthered by the devotion of their newspapers to the cause of promoting French-speaking colonization in Alberta. Both Le Courrier de l'Ouest and Le Progrès Albertain constantly published editorials pointing out the necessity of increased French-speaking colonization if those already present were not to be swamped and both published special issues devoted entirely to outlining the possibilities of the area for settlement. On one occasion Le Courrier de l'Ouest published 1,500 extra issues of a colonization special edition and distributed them free to the major Franco-American centers in the United States.⁴⁰

Although the clergy and various individuals were successful in their promotion of colonization, by 1912 it was felt among the élite that some sort of organization was needed to channel and direct all the efforts being made on behalf of French-speaking colonization. La Société de la Colonisation d'Edmonton created by Father Morin had long ago ceased to exist but the value of its contribution still

³⁸ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 30 juillet, 1908.

³⁹ Ibid., 28 janv., 1909.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 16 mars, 1911.

remained fresh in many people's minds. Thus on September 20, 1912 a new organization la Société de la Colonisation de l'Alberta was set up under the direction of the provisional directors P. E. Lessard, J. H. Picard, and L. A. Giroux. The first act of these directors was to begin the creation of le Bureau de la Colonisation de l'Alberta with Lessard as president and R. A. Blais as secretary.⁴¹ By November, 1912 the organization was selling shares and at the meeting held on November 20 the first concrete action was taken with the agreement to demand of the railroad companies that there be French-speaking employees in all their ticket offices.⁴² Meanwhile work progressed on the information office and by February, 1913 le Bureau de la Colonisation de l'Alberta was in full operation under the management of R. A. Blais at 224 Jasper Avenue East.⁴³ Later in the year the information office was taken over by la Société du Parler Français and a priest was appointed by Bishop Legal to work full time at the office as l'Organisateur de la Colonisation. The first priest to hold the position was Reverend Father A. Normandeau who was appointed in October, 1913 but upon his subsequent appointment as a missionnaire-colonisateur in January, 1914 he was replaced by Reverend J. A. Ouellette.⁴⁴

⁴¹Ibid., 9 janv., 1913.

⁴²Ibid., 30 janv., 1913.

⁴³Ibid., 27 fév., 1913.

⁴⁴Le Progrès Albertain, 8 janv., 1914.

The result of the work of the clergy, the elite, and the colonization bureau in this period was a substantial increase in the French-speaking population of both Edmonton and the Province of Alberta as a whole. While it is true that the main purpose of colonization was to establish agricultural settlers, many of those arriving in Edmonton decided to stay in the city itself. Particularly attracted to the urban rather than the rural area were those individuals who either were sufficiently well-educated to engage in a professional career or had some sort of business training. Although by the time the Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1916 appeared the population had decreased fairly substantially from its high in 1914 the figures in it still give a good idea of the overall increases in both the province and the city. The statistics showed that in Alberta as a whole there were 24,286 people of French origin out of a total population of 496,525⁴⁵ while in Edmonton there were 2,604 people of French origin out of a total population of 53,846⁴⁶. This made the French-speaking community the second largest ethnic group in the city and gave them the second highest French-speaking percentage in the total population of western cities after Saint Boniface.⁴⁷ Edmonton was therefore

⁴⁵Census of Prairie Provinces, 1916, p. 222.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 149.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. xx.

a western French-speaking center and the community were proud of the fact. This was evident, for example, in the speech of Reverend Father Theophile Hudon, S.J., the rector of the Jesuit College, to the Institut Canadien in Quebec in January, 1915. A report of the speech in the Quebec newspaper L'Événement stated that "il nous parle aussi assez longuement d'Edmonton, la capitale d'Alberta, la ville la plus 'québécoise' de l'Ouest Canadien, celle de l'Alberta où les Canadiens-français exercent le plus d'influence".⁴⁸

The interest that Edmonton's French-speaking community expressed in colonization between 1905 and 1914 was duplicated in their concern with educational matters. As a result of the bitter experience of the Manitoba schools question and the struggle for their school rights during the Autonomy Bills crisis the French were quite naturally ever vigilant. But owing mainly to the general satisfaction of the community with the rights provided in the Autonomy Bills and their great involvement in educational matters few problems arose in the period. The only difficulty of note stemmed from a concern over the quality, not the quantity, of education, as in 1912 it was noted with some chagrin by many parents that after two years of primary course in French some students could still not read or write the language.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 14 janv., 1915, reprinted from L'Événement.

⁴⁹ Le Progrès, 8 fév., 1912.

As in the past the most immediate concern of the community was to retain adequate representation on the Separate School Board. During this period they were eminently successful in doing so with at most times three French-speaking representatives on what was for many years a five member board. Among those serving numerous terms were J. H. Picard who completed eight successive years as president in 1915⁵⁰, H. Milton Martin, Wilfrid Gariépy, and P. E. Lessard. In addition Emile Tessier held the position of Secretary of the Separate School Board from 1905 to 1918 when he retired to study for the priesthood.⁵¹ Other members of the community worked within the school system itself and achieved a great deal of success, the most notable of them being Julien LeBlanc. LeBlanc was born at Belle Côte, Nova Scotia in 1886 and attended the Normal School at Truro before obtaining his Bachelor of Arts from Saint Anne's College. In September, 1907 he came to Spring Lake, Alberta to teach and then in 1908 came to a post at the Separate School on Third Street in Edmonton.⁵² While teaching here in 1911 his first in a long series of successes in the educational field occurred when he was appointed to the examination bureau for secondary education in

⁵⁰Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 14 janv., 1915.

⁵¹Maclean, p. 100.

⁵²Interview with Julien LeBlanc, November 3, 1970.

Alberta.⁵³ This was followed in July, 1912 by his appointment to the post of School Inspector for the Province of Alberta, an appointment acclaimed by the entire French-speaking community.⁵⁴ LeBlanc's first posting as inspector was to the Onoway district but later he was transferred to the Sturgeon district and then to the Clover Bar district. In 1938 he became the latter district's first Superintendent.⁵⁵

In addition to the involvement of the foregoing individuals, two other developments during these years contributed to the community's success in educational matters. One of these was the appearance in Edmonton of bilingual educational institutions. The first of these appeared in 1910 when the Juniorate of Saint John the Apostle (Oblate Fathers) was moved from Pincher Creek to Edmonton. The purpose of the Juniorate was to provide education for young men who intended to become missionary priests and in its first year of operation in Edmonton twenty-nine pupils with this intention attended.⁵⁶ Although the Juniorate was well received by the French-speaking community, their enthusiasm was even greater for the long awaited Jesuit College which opened its doors on October 2, 1913. The idea of a classical college in Edmonton had first taken root as early as 1904

⁵³ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 22 juin, 1911.

⁵⁴ Le Progrès, 25 juillet, 1912.

⁵⁵ Interview with Julien LeBlanc, November 3, 1970.

⁵⁶ Maclean, pp. 111-12.

but it was not until August, 1912 that Reverend Father T. Hudon, S.J., arrived in the city to undertake the construction of such a college. The building itself, which was constructed on the site now occupied by the Charles Camsell Hospital, was largely financed through the monetary pledges of many of the leading men of the community such as J. H. Picard and J. H. Gariépy.⁵⁷ Upon completion it began its classes with forty students divided into four elementary classes, two each in English and French. The original staff, all Jesuits, included Reverend Father Hudon, rector and prefect of studies; Reverend Father Drummond, professor of theology; Reverend Father E. Lessard, prefect of discipline; Reverend Father Mailhot, professor of Latin; Reverend Fathers Richards and Crawford, professors of English; and Reverend Fathers Hamelin, Beaudry, and Belisle, professors of French and Mathematics.⁵⁸

The creation of bilingual colleges fulfilled a real need in the French-speaking community's struggle to maintain a separate identity and added a further cultural element to the life of the city. With the creation of a classical college French-speaking parents who desired their children to have a classical education in the French language no longer had to send them to Quebec, which many could not afford. Likewise, it was hoped in the community that the Jesuit

⁵⁷ Interview with J. Laurier Picard, October 22, 1970.

⁵⁸ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 2 oct., 1913.

College would become a training ground for the elite who would lead the community in the future.⁵⁹ It is therefore not surprising that the sons of many of Edmonton's foremost French-speaking citizens were among the first to attend. Students in the College's first few years of operation included the sons of J. H. Picard, J. J. LeBlanc, A. Boileau, J.-L. Côté, J.-M. Déchène, and J. N. Pomerlau. The extent to which French-speaking parents availed themselves of the opportunity to provide their children with a classical French education is shown by the fact that in July, 1914, less than a year after its opening, fifty-nine out of a total of seventy students at the College were French.⁶⁰

A second victory for the French community in the educational field came in May, 1914 with the announcement that teacher diplomas from Quebec would under certain circumstances be recognized in Alberta schools. The Minister of Education, J. R. Boyle, stated that teachers with a Quebec diploma could teach if they had sufficient English and provided that they agree to take a five week course at the Normal School.⁶¹ The attainment of this concession was due more than anything to the pressure put on Boyle by the members of la Société du Parler Français of which this demand was one of the stated objectives. It was hoped that under

⁵⁹ Interview with Father Roméo Ketchen, October 2, 1970 and A.-M. Déchène, September 29, 1970.

⁶⁰ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 2 juillet, 1914.

⁶¹ Ibid., 18 juin, 1914.

these new circumstances it would be much easier to attract bilingual teachers to Alberta and thereby strengthen the position of French in the school curriculum.

Obviously the years from 1905 to 1914 were among the most interesting and most productive in the French-speaking community's history. Largely through the involvement of the elite in all possible areas of activity, whether social, religious, political or educational, they achieved their foremost aims--the maintenance of an identifiable French-speaking community possessing certain rights, and, by the promotion of good relations with the English population, the acceptance of this community and its rights in the larger community. Considering their proportion in the total population this was no small accomplishment.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMMUNITY IN THE WAR 1914-1918

During the period from 1905 to 1914 the success of the community in their endeavors led them to envisage the future and their part in it with a great deal of optimism. Although the city's boom had collapsed in 1913 and the population had begun to decline, this seemed merely a temporary fluctuation; matters would soon rectify themselves. Unfortunately this seeming state of tranquility was abruptly shattered with the outbreak of the First World War on July 31, 1914 and Canada's entry into it early in August. With this turn of events the previously rather isolated West, including Edmonton, was suddenly called upon to take part in the affairs of the world and join the rest of Canada in the war effort. This in itself made these years difficult for all Edmonton's citizens, but they became particularly difficult for the French-speaking segment of the population because of their identification with their brethren in Quebec during the conscription crisis. At the same time the continuing decrease in population in the city and the financial disasters incurred by some of the leading financiers of the community led to doubts and fears about the future.

When the news of the outbreak of war reached Edmonton the city's population generally greeted it with an outburst

of patriotic enthusiasm.¹ This was particularly true of the French-speaking community since by the German Schlieffen Plan it was their ancestral homeland that was among the first to bear the brunt of the attack. Both Le Courrier de l'Ouest and Le Progrès Albertain overflowed with news of the situation in Belgium and France and both immediately published numerous appeals for volunteers. It was also from among the population of the French-speaking community that the first active fighting men of the city were drawn. Many of the recently arrived immigrants from France were as citizens and military reservists still subject to conscription and a great number of these left immediately to join their battalions. They were complemented by French citizens who, like René Lemarchand, departed for France to aid in the struggle in any way possible even though they were not subject to military duty.² The French-speaking community as a whole supported the efforts of these men with the setting up on August 20 of a bureau for the collection of funds to aid the wives of French reservists.³

It was not long, however, before volunteer units began to be formed in Edmonton as part of the Canadian Army. The 19th Alberta Dragoons, composed largely of veterans, departed three weeks after the beginning of the war, and on

¹MacGregor, p. 209.

²Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 6 août, 1914.

³Ibid., 20 août, 1914.

August 7 the Department of Militia authorized the formation of the 9th Battalion. Two months later the 3rd Regiment Canadian Mounted Rifles began recruiting in Edmonton among other places, and on December 26 Lieutenant-Colonel Griesbach began to form the 49th Battalion. In early 1915 the ranks of three more battalions were rapidly filled, the 51st, 63rd, and 66th Infantry Battalions.⁴ Although no exact figures are available, the French-speaking Edmontonians did their share in helping to quickly fill up the ranks of these units. Here the influence of the leaders of the community played an important role as for example in the case of the 51st Battalion in which many French-Edmontonians enrolled because Colonel Dr. R. de Lotbinière-Harwood was the original commander.⁵

Although many members of the community joined these units being formed in Edmonton, most of them hoped that there would be a strictly French-Canadian company created in Quebec which they could join. On September 13 a meeting was held at the Separate School on 3rd Street to solicit volunteers for this expected company. The meeting, presided over by J. A. Galibois and Major DeBlois Thibaudeau, featured patriotic speeches by J. H. Picard and A. Boileau and resulted in fifty volunteers.⁶ The success of this and further meetings in enlisting volunteers for the French-

⁴MacGregor, pp. 209-212.

⁵Interview with A.-M. Déchène, September 29, 1970.

⁶Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 17 sept., 1914.

Canadian company was at least partly due to the tradition of a French-Canadian military group in the Edmonton area. This resulted from the creation in 1905 by Major DeBlois Thibaudeau, the manager of the Credit Foncier in Edmonton and a former captain with the 65th Battalion of Montreal, of an independent squadron of Mounted Rifles in the Morinville district. Two years after its creation the squadron, known as "Squadron D", was fused with others in the formation of the 19th Regiment Alberta Mounted Rifles, later the 19th Alberta Dragoons.⁷ "Squadron D" in 1908 was composed of seventy-five men from Edmonton, Morinville, and Saint Albert with its headquarters in Edmonton. Among its officers were A. Boileau, P. E. Lessard, Auguste Lessard, Leo Savard, Louis Arsenault, L. J. A. Lambert, and Joseph-M. Déchène, many of whom were subsequently active in organizing and recruiting units during the war years.⁸

Despite the community's success in recruiting volunteers for the expected French-Canadian company none had been formed by the time the First Division left Canada for Europe. As a result many French-speaking Edmontonians continued to enroll in English units until September 30 when the government finally authorized the formation of the 22nd French-Canadian Battalion in Quebec.⁹ Some immediately went to

⁷ Le Canadian Français, mai, 1916.

⁸ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 27 fév., 1908 and 13 mai, 1909.

⁹ Wade, II, p. 655.

Quebec to join the new battalion but its ranks were so quickly filled from that province that very few from Edmonton were among its original members. With this turn of events the idea of creating a battalion of western French-Canadians began to germinate in the minds of a few of the elite of the community. No immediate action was taken and during the first part of 1915 Edmonton's French-Canadians had to be content either to join English-speaking units or to become volunteers in the new Quebec based French-Canadian battalions, the 41st, 57th, and 69th Infantry Battalions.¹⁰

By the fall of 1915 the idea of a western French-Canadian battalion was receiving widespread acceptance and finally Major DeBlois Thibaudeau wrote the government requesting permission to begin the creation of such a unit. The request was met with a refusal by the government which suggested that Thibaudeau might better spend his time in obtaining French-Canadian recruits for English battalions.¹¹ Soon after, the government realized that all means of attempting to improve enlistment must be tried and at the beginning of December authorized the formation of the 233rd French-Canadian Battalion in Edmonton under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Edouard Leprohon of Montreal. Toward the end of December René Nublat was instructed to open a recruiting office in Edmonton and soon articles were

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 668.

¹¹ Edmonton Bulletin, Dec. 4, 1917.

appearing in the French language press urging the French-speaking community to volunteer and fight en famille.¹²

Within a month of its opening the office had inscribed eighty-two volunteers, and by April, 1916 the list of local officers included Pay Master Captain Paul E. Poirier; Quarter-Master Captain Leo Savard; Lieutenants A. Boileau, Louis Arsenault, P. E. Guay, A. C. Larivière, Auguste Lessard, Joseph Tessier, J. G. Turgeon and E. Mireault; Medical Examiner Dr. A. Blais; and Director of Publicity H. Biron.¹³

The recruitment of the 233rd Battalion went well at first but by the summer of 1916 it had slowed down considerably and the recruiting officers sent out from Edmonton had to redouble their efforts in the French-speaking centers of the West. By June the military authorities were allowing French-speaking volunteers recently enrolled in other units to transfer to the 233rd and this helped somewhat to alleviate the shortages.¹⁴ In August, 1916 enough men had been enrolled to begin formal training and the recruits moved to Sarcee Camp near Calgary while recruitment efforts continued in Edmonton. Finally at the beginning of 1917 the battalion, now 300 strong, finished training and in early February they embarked for the East on a special train.¹⁵ Plans had been

¹² Le Canadien Français, janv., 1916.

¹³ Ibid., avril, 1916.

¹⁴ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 1 juin, 1916.

¹⁵ Ibid., 15 fév., 1917.

made to send the 233rd overseas as a unit but owing to the lack of quotas and the need for reinforcements in other French-Canadian units the men were incorporated into various other battalions, particularly the famous 22nd French-Canadian.¹⁶ Several members of Edmonton's community subsequently became notable members of these other battalions, among them J. B. T. Caron who was promoted to an officer of the 22nd¹⁷ and Pierre Eugene Guay, one of the original officers of the 233rd, who became second in command of Company "C" of the 22nd and received the Military Cross.¹⁸

The difficulties that the 233rd experienced in recruiting in 1916 and early 1917 were merely a reflection of the situation in Canada as a whole. Of the eleven authorized French-Canadian battalions only four were able completely to fill their ranks, and during the first five months of 1916 only 127,000 men enlisted in all Canada with Quebec filling but one-quarter of her allotted share.¹⁹ By June, 1916 enlistment figures for Canada had dropped to half those of April and by December they had dropped by half again, while at the same time the Canadian Army Corps overseas had suffered severe losses in the fighting at the front. The result of this state of affairs was a demand for conscription, an act which was to evoke one of the bitterest racial

¹⁶ Interview with C. E. Gariépy, November 23, 1970.

¹⁷ L'Union, 8 mai, 1919.

¹⁸ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 17 oct., 1917.

¹⁹ Wade, II, p. 693.

divisions in Canada's history. An event of this magnitude could not but help affect Edmonton's French-speaking community.

It is beyond the scope of this work to go in detail into the reasons behind the situation which resulted in the conscription crisis of 1917. Suffice it to say that by the middle of 1916 it was felt by many English-speaking Canadians that the French-Canadians of Quebec were not doing their part in providing volunteers for the Canadian fighting forces. Although many figures were produced by Quebec newspapers and various French-Canadian groups to prove the contrary, it seems in retrospect that the insinuations were correct as most estimates place at about 35,000 the number of French-Canadians serving in the Canadian forces. Thus the French-Canadian segment or forty per cent of Canada's population provided only five per cent of the troops.²⁰ Whatever the true figures the French-Canadians of Quebec felt that they were doing their part and greatly resented the attacks made against them. Such was the state of affairs when in May, 1917 Borden announced that he intended to introduce conscription, an action which French-Canadian Quebecers had long feared and which resulted in their isolation from the rest of Canada in the election of December, 1917.

The attacks which were launched against French-

²⁰E. H. Armstrong, The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-18 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), pp. 249-50.

Canadians in the English press of Canada could not avoid arousing the interest and to some extent the anger of Edmonton's French-speaking community. After all there was still a close affinity of interest in the protection of la survi-
vance between Quebec and the French minorities in the West. Western French-speaking communities looked to Quebec for support in their demands and reciprocated by supporting Quebec in hers. Added to this was the fact that a large number of the new French-speaking settlers in the area were natives of Quebec and most of them still had relatives living there with whom they identified. With these ties binding the two groups together it is not surprising that the crisis over enlistment and the election of December, 1917 elicited a definite reaction in Edmonton's French-speaking community.

The question remains whether, apart from their identification with their brethren in Quebec, there was any reason for Edmonton's French-speaking community to feel that the attacks on French-Canadians included themselves. Upon a study of the information available it seems as though there was not. First of all, as no figures were kept of French-Canadian enlistment by provinces it is next to impossible to estimate the percentage of Alberta's French-Canadian population which enlisted. All that is known is that out of a total of 14,100 French-Canadians in the armed forces on April 30, 1917, the eve of conscription, almost half were from provinces other than Quebec.²¹ Yet when this fact is

²¹Ibid., p. 250.

combined with the generally moderate tone of the English language press on the question of western French-Canadian enlistment and the leading position of Edmonton in the formation of the 233rd it may be assumed that Edmonton's and furthermore all the West's French-speaking communities were doing their part. This conclusion is further fortified by two articles which appeared in Le Patriote de l'Ouest of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan in February, 1917. The first of these was a report of a speech by G. W. Brown, the ex-Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan, in which he stated that the problem of recruitment of French-Canadians existed only in Quebec and that in the West there was no difference in the proportion of French language and English language recruits who had enrolled.²² The other article was a reproduction of the report of Colonel Arthur Migneault, general director of French-Canadian recruitment, published after the completion of a tour of the West which included Edmonton as one of the major stopping points. During the tour he found that the English-speaking population of the West had a high opinion of western French-Canadians and recognized their contribution to the war effort. This contribution, he stated, included despite their limited numbers French-Canadian volunteers in the ranks of every regiment departing and the creation of their own battalion, the 233rd.²³

²²Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 1 fév., 1917.

²³Ibid., 15 fév., 1917.

Thus it is evident that there was little reason why Edmonton's French-speaking community should feel that the attacks against French-Canadian participation included themselves. Yet because of their identification with Quebec they to some extent did feel included and from the summer of 1916 onward there was a constant appeal in the western French language press calling on more of their number to enlist even though many felt that they had already done their share. Typical of these appeals was an open letter from J. G. Turgeon, the M.L.A. for Ribstone and a Lieutenant in the 233rd, which in part read:

...La population de langue française est actuellement au Canada l'objet de bien de critiques, mais quoique beaucoup de ces accusations soient fausses, il n'en pas moins vrai que tout le pays a les yeux fixés sur nous, y compris l'Angleterre, de qui dépendent tous nos droits.

Nous sommes même à de supporter leur examen; mais n'oublions pas que, sous divers rapports, la guerre actuelle a changé le cours de idées qui sont pour le moment surexcitées et impressionnables. Nous devons tourner cette impressionnabilité à notre avantage et créer une opinion de nous-mêmes qui ne doit jamais s'effacer...²⁴

Appeals such as Turgeon's for increased enlistment and moderation continued throughout the rest of 1916 and in early 1917, but in the superheated atmosphere at the time of the announcement of conscription some of the moderation had disappeared. At the beginning of May a well-known Edmonton lawyer, L. A. Giroux, stated in a speech defending Quebec that French-Canadians were being falsely accused and that people were frankly prejudiced against them.²⁵

²⁴Le Canadien Français, sept., 1916.

²⁵Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 17 mai, 1917.

The reaction of the community to the issue of conscription itself from before its announcement until the election of December, 1917 is of some interest. Although the idea of conscription was always completely anathema to Quebec's French-Canadians, it seems that there was not at least originally as much of a consensus of opinion against it among members of Edmonton's and other western French-speaking centers' communities. For example, as late as February, 1917 Lucien Boudreau, the M.L.A. for Saint Albert, replied to the demand of Dr. Stanley, the M.L.A. for High River, to know what French-Canadians had done for the war effort with the retort; "...leur devoir, autant que vous, plus que vous...moi meme je suis pret a voter la conscription et la taxe pour le fonds patriotique--votre patriotisme peut-il me suivre jusqu'a-là?".²⁶ Similarly, Le Patriote de l'Ouest, to which a goodly number of the community subscribed, published an editorial on May 24, 1917 in which the news of conscription was received rather mildly.²⁷ However, probably as a result of the manifestations in Quebec over conscription, the increasingly sharp attacks of the English press on French-Canadians, and Laurier's idea of a referendum on the conscription issue opinion soon seemed to harden against it. In this opinion members of the community

²⁶ Le Canadien Français, fév., 1917.

²⁷ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 24 mai, 1917.

were supported by the federal member for Edmonton West, Frank Oliver, and many powerful members of the Alberta government who favored Laurier's leadership and his proposal of a referendum. The French press of Edmonton soon took up the cry and became openly anti-conscriptionist with the June edition of Le Canadien Français rejoicing that French-Edmontonians "ont été solides comme un bloc contre les candidats imperialistes et conscriptionnistes aux dernières élections provinciales".²⁸ At the same time Le Patriote de l'Ouest of Prince Albert abandoned its original moderate position and unmercifully attacked conscription. The paper went into flights of ecstasy in the reporting of the news of the support for Laurier and the vote against conscription without referendum at the western Liberal convention held in Winnipeg on August 7-8, 1917.²⁹

Between the time of this Winnipeg Liberal convention and the election of December, 1917 the attitude of the West, previously almost totally anti-conscriptionist, underwent a drastic change. This was largely due to the creation of a Union government containing western Liberal cabinet ministers, including former Alberta Premier A. L. Sifton, and to the promise of General Mewburn, the Minister of Militia, to exempt from military service the sons of farmers engaged in the production of food.³⁰ As a result in the election of

²⁸Le Canadien Français, juin, 1917.

²⁹Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 15 août, 1917.

³⁰Wade, II, p. 753.

December 17, 1917 the West voted solidly for the Union government with the Liberals winning only two seats. Yet it seems that western French-speaking voters and those in particular in Edmonton and its surrounding area remained quite strongly pro-Liberal.

The two constitutencies of Edmonton West and Edmonton East both returned Unionist candidates but an examination of the results by polls shows that the Liberal candidates received strong French-speaking support. In Edmonton West the battle was between the Liberal Frank Oliver and the Unionist W. A. Griesbach, and although Griesbach won almost all the city polls Oliver captured Poll 13 next to Saint Joachim's Church by a vote of 43 to 31. The French-speaking rural centers in Edmonton West were even more decidedly Liberal as in Morinville the vote was 305 to 21, in Legal 132 to 12, and in Rivière-qui-Barre 85 to 11 in Oliver's favor.³¹ The constituency of Edmonton East presents a somewhat more complicated case since the Unionist candidate was Henry A. Mackie, a well-known Edmonton lawyer who was the product of the union of an English father and a French-Canadian mother. Mackie was completely bilingual and took some part in the activities of the French-speaking community, factors which undoubtedly gained him some French-speaking voters' support. The results of the three polls in the vicinity of Immaculate Conception Church show that there was

³¹Edmonton Bulletin, Dec. 18, 1917.

a fairly even split between Mackie and his Liberal opponent Alex May, with Mackie narrowly winning two of the polls and May one. In the rural part of the constituency the results were quite different as the French-speaking centers gave May their full support. In Lafond the vote was 44 to 6, in Plamondonville 81 to 20, in Brosseau 33 to 14, and in Charron 51 to 2 for May.³²

The opposition of the French-speaking population to the Unionist government, especially in Edmonton West, was to a great degree due to the influence of the political elite of the community. It was well known that two of the foremost French-speaking members in the Legislature, Wilfrid Gariépy and J.-L. Côté, were completely opposed to the Unionist government and supported Laurier.³³ These two men along with numerous others including Lucien Boudreau, Omer St. Germain, Louis Madore, L. A. Giroux, and Joseph Boulanger accompanied Oliver on his speaking engagements to French-speaking centers and always delivered scathing speeches against conscription and Union government.³⁴ It was expected in the community that Oliver would be a sure winner and before the soldier's ballots were added in he was ahead of his opponent, a fact that led some French-Edmontonians to suspect the government of juggling the soldier's votes.³⁵ Still it

³² Ibid.

³³ L. G. Thomas, p. 182.

³⁴ Edmonton Bulletin, Nov. 30 and Dec. 11, 1917.

³⁵ Interview with J. O. Pilon, November 2, 1970.

cannot be denied that on the whole at least some difference of opinion within the community as to conscription and Unionist government was shown by the support for Mackie in some city polls where there was a large proportion of French-speaking voters.

Although problems related to enlistment and conscription were constantly in the thoughts of French-Edmontonians, they still had to deal with the day to day realities of the war. There was, of course, heart-felt grief and sympathy for those losing sons or husbands in the blood bath at the front but there were also moments of rejoicing upon the reception of news of Allied victories or the success of individuals from the community. These successes were numerous as on the whole members of Edmonton's French-speaking community played a distinguished role in supporting the Allied cause as a few examples will illustrate.

The first notice of success of a member of the community came in July, 1915 with news of the appointment of Professor E. Sonet of the University of Alberta to the important post of interpreter for the English Army. Sonet, a French citizen, had been among the first reservists to depart for France at the outbreak of the war and had immediately been incorporated into the army. However, his dexterity in translation was quickly recognized by the French command and resulted in his assignment to the important post of interpreter to help maintain liaison between the two armies.³⁶ The

³⁶Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 1 juillet, 1915.

success of Sonet was followed by news of the decoration in December, 1915 of Dr. Charles Valery with the Croix de guerre of France on the field of battle. Valery, like Sonet, had been among the first to depart for France and had earned his distinction in the bitter fighting at Bois Le Prêtre, Pont-à-Mousson, and Butte de Tahue. Later in the war Dr. Valery was promoted to the grade of Knight in the Order of the Legion of Honor for his continued bravery.³⁷ A third success story was that of Dr. R. de Lotbinière-Harwood who was one of the chief organizers of the 51st Battalion of Edmonton and was a Lieutenant-Colonel when he was sent overseas. Once in France his medical talents were needed above his military ones and in November, 1917 he was named chief surgeon of the Canadian hospital at Saint Cloud.³⁸ These three were, of course, only a few among the members of Edmonton's community overseas and many others including C. E. Gariépy, Antonio Prince, Joseph Tessier, Roy Royal, Gérard Blais, Arthur Déchène, and Antonin Montpetit also served with distinction. For their part those of the community who remained at home did what they could to support the efforts of the men overseas. H. Milton Martin, for example, was the chief organizer for the Victory Bond campaign in the Peace River and Grande Prairie district³⁹, and a group of

³⁷ L'Union, 15 fév., 1918.

³⁸ Ibid., 1 déc., 1917.

³⁹ Ibid., 15 oct., 1918.

women, le Chapitre Jeanne d'Arc, organized by Mesdames J.-L. Côté and W. Gariépy attempted to provide aid to the families of the men composing the French-Canadian battalion.⁴⁰

The social life of the community underwent an interesting transition as the difficulties over enlistment and conscription became more apparent. At the beginning of the war there tended to be somewhat of a slackening of social activity as soirées became less numerous and previously active organizations such as le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' no longer functioned. Perhaps most unfortunate of all, though, was the gradual dying out of the work of the most popular organization in the immediate pre-war era, la Société du Parler Français. Although plans were made to hold the fourth annual provincial convention in June, 1915 it seems that because of a lack of participation it did not take place.⁴¹ This decline in activity of some groups was to be expected with so many of the community's active members departing for the war or being involved in other war orientated activities.

Any slackening of activity apparent at the beginning of the war gradually began to disappear in late 1915. At this time the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Association began the publication of its own organ Le Canadien Français largely at the instigation and expense of Dr. Joseph Boulanger, the president of the Association from 1915 to 1918. Then with

⁴⁰Le Canadien Français, avril, 1916.

⁴¹Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 11 mars, 1915; L'Union, 18 déc., 1917.

the growing attacks on French-Canadians in 1916 the community felt the need to draw closer together and there was a resurgence of all aspects of social activity. The first signs of this were again evident in the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Association which in May, 1916 sent a resolution to the Franco-Ontarians supporting their position in the Ontario schools question and in June for the first time sent a delegate, Reverend Father Hudon, S.J., to represent them at le Congrès d'Action Française in Montreal.⁴² In 1917 as the conscription crisis deepened all sorts of meetings were held and appeals made to French-Canadians to stand together and maintain their identity. In fact it is interesting to note that in the same edition that it reported the Unionist victory in the election the newly initiated French newspaper of Edmonton L'Union called for the resurrection of la Société du Parler Français, which "...dort du sommeil du juste depuis bientôt quatre ans", in order that it might undertake an urgent crusade to maintain the French language.⁴³ Although this valuable group was not reconstituted, the month of December, 1917 saw the revival of le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc', an equally important organization. By February, 1918 le Cercle had been completely reorganized and was composed of separate literary, musical, and dramatic sections with A. Hervieux as its director and U. J. Blais as its manager.⁴⁴

⁴² Le Canadien Français, juin, 1916.

⁴³ L'Union, 8 déc., 1917.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 15 fév., 1918.

A further contribution of the group on behalf of the French language was the organization by two of its members, Charles Turgeon and Paul Jenvrin, of le concours de composition française in May, 1918. Le concours was a writing contest in French for school students and its major prize was a bursary to attend the Normal School.⁴⁵ It was hoped that the provision of this bursary would help to alleviate the shortage of bilingual school teachers in Alberta. In April, 1918 the renewed feeling of patriotism and union among the community's members as a result of conscription and the resurgence of community activity was remarked upon by those present at a meeting of le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc'. During this meeting the idea was expressed that because of this feeling there should be some sort of center built as a rendezvous for French-Edmontonians and as a headquarters for the various ethnic organizations.⁴⁶

During the war the economic situation of the community and the city as a whole was also a major consideration among the French-speaking population. Many, of course, had lost substantially when the boom collapsed and although there was an artificial prosperity created by the war the future looked at best uncertain. Yet they remained hopeful and joined together to try and make the best of the situation. In September, 1914 le Comité de Salut Public Canadien-

⁴⁵Ibid., 1 mai, 1918.

⁴⁶Ibid., 1 avril, 1918.

Français was created under the presidency of A. Boileau to aid unemployed members of the community in finding work.⁴⁷ Later, in June, 1915, the leading businessmen of Edmonton's French community met to discuss the city's financial situation and agreed to form le Cercle d'Études Economique to study economic problems as they arose and to decide upon means of common action. Emanating from the group, whose president was Alex Lefort and secretary Emile Tessier, were ideas for tax reform and municipalization of tramways and telephones.⁴⁸ In later meetings le Cercle d'Études Economique decided that the natural gas offer of the Northern Alberta Natural Gas Development Ltd., which had recently been turned down, was essential to the city from a domestic and industrial point of view. As a result they undertook an active campaign through the newspapers and through conferences at parish soirées to support the issue. These actions probably had at least some effect on the subsequent adoption of a contract for natural gas by a vote of 7,098 to 2,436 in November, 1915.⁴⁹

Apart from concern with the economic affairs of the city as a whole the French-speaking community retained its interest in maintaining an identity in the city's business community. A few new businesses appeared, including a firm

⁴⁷Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 24 sept., 1914.

⁴⁸Ibid., 21 oct., 1915.

⁴⁹Ibid., 11 nov., 1915.

of general merchants created by two of the community's leading politicians, P. E. Lessard and Lucien Boudreau. But the greatest triumph in the business world in the eyes of the community was the creation of a French department in the Johnstone Walker Company department store under the direction of Albert J. Beland.⁵⁰ The desire for French-speaking clerks in stores and for French language catalogues had for many years been one of the community's foremost demands and thus the appearance of a French department in one of Edmonton's leading stores was regarded as a real turning point.

In the final analysis, the war years were at best a trying period for the French-speaking community of Edmonton. Although they had taken a distinguished part in the armed services, the vicissitudes of the trouble over conscription and to some extent the Ontario schools question made them more aware than ever of their isolation in the predominantly English-speaking West. They had, however, been successful in maintaining their position in all aspects of the city's life and they looked to the elite to redouble their efforts to maintain this position in the post-war years.

⁵⁰Le Canadien Français, janv., 1917.

CHAPTER VII

SIGNS OF DECLINE 1918-1935:

SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS, AND

ECONOMIC LIFE

With the end of the World War Edmonton entered a period of its history that may on the whole be best described as one of stagnation. After a post-war recession the economic situation seemed to improve during the twenties but it was once again dealt a crippling blow with the onset of the depression in 1929. At the same time the city's population recovered only very slowly and it was not until around 1930 that its numbers were equal to those at the height of the boom in 1912. The French-speaking community was along with the rest of the population affected by these conditions but there were also some changes and trends peculiar to the community itself which lead to the conclusion that the period from the end of the war to 1935 witnessed the beginning of a gradual decline of the community's identity and influence in the city. This was by no means an immediate or a complete process; rather it was a slow one which did not affect equally all the community's activities as in some instances they were tremendously successful in their endeavors. In the final analysis, though, it cannot be denied that the once tightly-knit community of the

1877 to 1918 period was definitely on the wane by 1935.

Perhaps one of the key processes at work during the period were the changes going on within the social structure of the community. These changes resulted basically from the beginning of a change in the composition of the community's elite and by the gradual disappearance of an important part of this elite, the French-speaking clergy. Since it was the elite which gave the community its direction and helped insure that it retained its identity and rights, these factors are important considerations in the reasons behind the beginning of the community's decline.

As we have seen, the non-religious sector of the elite was composed mainly of business and professional men and politicians who were natives of Quebec and had come to Edmonton on their own or as part of an organized colonization group. From 1877 to 1918 these men had served as effective leaders of the community but from 1918 to 1935 a goodly number of them no longer continued to do so. Some left Edmonton altogether either to return to Quebec or to go on to areas where prospects seemed brighter. Typical of these were Wilfrid Gariépy who resigned his portfolio in September, 1918 in order to return to Trois Rivières, Quebec, Major DeBlois Thibaudeau who returned to Montreal in 1929 to open an insurance business, and J. G. Turgeon who in the early twenties went to British Columbia. Secondly, and by far the most important factor, was the retirement from active life and the subsequent death of many of the most important

members of the elite. Among those who died were J.-L. Côté and Louis Madore in 1924, J. H. Gariépy in 1927, P. E. Lessard in 1931, Georges Roy in 1932, Stanislas LaRue in 1933, J. H. Picard in 1934, and J. N. Pomerlau in 1935.

There were, of course, many who continued to retain their positions among the elite of the community throughout these years including, among others, H. Milton Martin, A. Boileau, Dr. A. Blais, J.-M. Déchène, and L. A. Giroux, but at the same time the disappearance of many of the former elite left the way clear for new men to take their place. For the most part the replacements were found among graduates of the Jesuit College who had subsequently gone on to complete their studies at the University of Alberta or other institutions. Among the most active of these in the period under discussion were Paul E. Poirier, André-M. Déchène, J. Laurier Picard, Roméo Ketchen, and Lucien Maynard. Yet between these men and the former elite there was a fundamental difference--they had grown up in the culturally mixed western environment while their predecessors had been raised in the much more culturally restrictive Quebec environment. In other words these young men had grown up in constant contact with the English and a variety of other nationalities. As a result their feelings of race consciousness were much less pronounced than those of the older generation. Therefore these feelings were communicated to the community to a much lesser degree and eventually the sense among the general French-speaking population of membership in a community with

a separate identity began to weaken.

While these changes were taking place among the non-religious sectors of the elite a quite different problem was affecting the religious sector. The French-speaking clergy had always been the foremost bastion of the French-speaking community, and even though the transfer of the seat of the diocese from Saint Albert to Edmonton had effectively eliminated any hopes of the area remaining a French-speaking Catholic region, prior to 1920 they still formed the majority of the diocese's clergy. In 1920 when the total Catholic population of the Archdiocese of Edmonton was 38,500, of which 18,094 were of French origin¹, it was served by 98 priests of whom 64 were French-speaking². To this point the existence of a French-speaking bishop had ensured that the French-speaking clergy would retain this predominant position but with the death of Archbishop Legal on March 10, 1920 the situation began rapidly to change. Legal's successor as Archbishop, Henry J. O'Leary, the first non-French-speaking head of the diocese, realized that the missionary period of the Church's work in western Canada was largely over and that the religious duties once performed by the orders such as the Oblates must necessarily be transferred to secular priests. As a result he began a campaign of recruiting English-speaking secular priests, mostly from the

¹Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 3 nov., 1920.

²La Survivance, 5 sept., 1934.

Maritimes, an act which immediately elicited vociferous protests from many French-speaking Catholics.³ Despite the protests of the French, O'Leary's campaign was a great success and by 1931 when the French-speaking Catholic population of the archdiocese had reached 25,933 and the English-speaking Catholic population 34,144 there were 64 English-speaking secular priests to serve them but only 16 French-speaking ones.⁴ By this time it had come to the point that upon the departure or death of a French-speaking priest it often became necessary to appoint an English-speaking priest to a French parish for lack of a replacement.⁵ On the whole the decrease in numbers of this very important sector of the elite gradually deprived the community of one of the most important and active supports of its identity and further contributed to its decline.

It must not be imagined that while these processes were taking place the community ceased to function as an identifiable group. In fact the period even witnessed a variety of new attempts to advance the community's presence mainly through the promotion of the French language and culture in the city. For example, in 1921 le Train de l'Exposition de France visited Edmonton and attempted to inform

³ Interviews with Georges Bugnet, September 28, 1970 and Reverend Father Roméo Ketchen, October 2, 1970.

⁴ La Survivance, 5 sept., 1934.

⁵ Ibid., 4 nov., 1931.

the public on all aspects of French life and culture including styles, industry, agriculture, jewelry, literature, science, and art.⁶ Similarly an attempt was made to attract well-known French-speaking musical and dramatic artists to the city. This resulted in performances by many famous French individuals and groups in Edmonton including the widely known "Trio Larrieu" in August, 1922.⁷ Perhaps the most effective innovation of the period was the use of French on the radio. The first radio broadcast in Alberta originated over station C.J.C.A. on May 1, 1922 and the radio's popularity quickly became widespread.⁸ Although it took a few years before a large number of people were able to avail themselves of a receiving set, by 1928 the radio was well established. On December 19 of that year French listeners of C.J.C.A. were overjoyed to hear Louis Normandeau, an organizer for the Wheat Pool, explain the work of the Pool in French.⁹ This first use of French on local radio awakened the elite of the community to the possibilities of using it to promote the French language and culture. On Saint-Jean-Baptiste day in 1929 a French concert organized by Reverend Father Roméo Ketchen was given over University of Alberta radio with such local artists as Alice and

⁶Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 17 août, 1921.

⁷Ibid., 19 juillet, 1922.

⁸MacGregor, p. 232.

⁹La Survivance, 13 déc., 1928.

Albertine Lessard, Emilie Paradis, Olive Brosseau, Gertrude Baril, and René LeBlanc performing.¹⁰ This concert was so well received that several others were organized and eventually, in November, 1930, bi-monthly concerts in French began to be broadcast over C.J.C.A. with Ernest Côté as the announcer.¹¹ These bi-monthly concerts continued in the following years and in 1932 they were complemented by a French course given in a series of fifty lessons over C.K.U.A. by professor Hector Allard of the University.¹² It is unquestionable that this increasing use of French on the radio not only helped the French-speaking community to remain aware of their existence but also helped to make all listeners aware of the French community in the city and its culture and language.

These new manifestations of the French presence in the city were thus very important but they were only effective because they were complemented by the traditional social activities of the community. As in the past these activities tended to center on the Roman Catholic Church and the various French language organizations.

Although French-speaking Catholics were experiencing fears because of the replacement of Archbishop Legal by an English-speaking secular archbishop and the disappearance

¹⁰Ibid., 27 juin, 1929.

¹¹Ibid., 20 nov., 1930.

¹²Ibid., 19 oct., 1932.

of the French clergy, many continued in their determination to remain an identifiable Catholic group in the city. This was apparent in the continuing growth of the two French-speaking parishes, Saint Joachim's and Immaculate Conception, but even more so in the creation of a French-speaking Knights of Columbus group. Although some of the elite of the community had been founding members of the original Edmonton council of the Knights of Columbus, No. 1184, in 1907, by 1919 it was felt that the existence of two distinctly French-speaking parishes in the city warranted the creation of a strictly French-speaking council. On April 1 of that year forty members of the community met and laid the basis for le Conseil La Vérendrye of the Knights of Columbus, the first one of the French language in the West.¹³ The first Grand Knight of the council was Julien LeBlanc and during the remainder of the period he was succeeded by other prominent members of the community including Dr. J. E. Amyot, P. E. Lessard, J. W. Pigeon, Dr. J. L. Petitclerc, C. E. Gariépy, A. E. Rocque, and J. Julien.¹⁴ Almost immediately after its foundation le Conseil La Vérendrye became one of the real pillars of the French-speaking community in Edmonton and it soon began the task of organizing le Club La Vérendrye, a center for meetings of all French-speaking groups in the city. In 1920 a beautifully decorated older house

¹³ Ibid., 21 mars, 1929.

¹⁴ Ibid., 20 sept., 1930; Interview with Julien LeBlanc, November 3, 1970.

on the corner of 104 Street and Victoria Avenue was rented for this purpose and in 1922, when the membership of the council had reached 325, a company was formed and the building bought outright.¹⁵ Thereafter le Club La Vérendrye became the most favored rendezvous for the members of the community, while le Conseil La Vérendrye continued to grow in importance. In 1930 one of its foremost members, H. Milton Martin, was chosen to represent all the Knights of Columbus of Alberta at the convention of the Supreme Council in Boston.¹⁶

In terms of French language organizations apart from those of the Church there were some defeats and some victories. First of all, the two groups which in earlier years had been key factors in the retention of the community's identity, l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste and la Société du Parler Français, no longer continued to play their important roles. In fact la Société du Parler Français disappeared completely, and although l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste remained in existence, it was no longer as active or influential as previously. At the same time two other older organizations, le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' and l'Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne-française, continued to function successfully.

Le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc', which had been reorganized

¹⁵ Ibid., 21 mars, 1929; Interview with Mrs. J. E. Hart, September 25, 1970.

¹⁶ Ibid., 7 août, 1930.

during the war, continued to expand the work of its valuable annual concours de français until 1928. By this time it had grown to such dimensions that its control was passed on to the larger and more powerful l'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta. But the members of le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' were not content to remain inactive and under the guidance of their president, Henri de Savoye of the University of Alberta, began a new undertaking in 1929. This involved the distribution of prizes to the students in the public schools achieving the best grades in French examinations¹⁷, an innovation which was a further attempt to make the English-speaking community aware of the importance of French. The tremendous success of the endeavor was witnessed by the highly laudatory speeches praising it made by Minister of Education Baker and Mayor Bury at the banquet for the distribution of the contest's prizes in September, 1929.¹⁸ Of course, le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' also continued to promote its original function as a dramatic association and after 1930 went into a new area with the production of dramatic representations over the radio. In November, 1932 the organization reached a milestone when Alphonse Hervieux, who had been one of the group's creators, began to organize and direct his last play as its artistic director. The play, "Moi", included in its cast such well-known young drama

¹⁷Ibid., 2 mai, 1929.

¹⁸Ibid., 26 sept., 1929.

enthusiasts as Laurier Picard, Gérard Baril, Gérard St. Germain, and Jacques Jenvrin.¹⁹ But with Hervieux's retirement from le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' its dramatic functions soon tended to lapse and in May, 1933 they were taken over by a new group, le Théâtre Français, under the direction of Laurier Picard.²⁰

Like le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc', l'Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne-française also continued to have its important moments during this period. The original branch of the group, le Cercle Grandin, had ceased its activity during the war but was revived in the autumn of 1925. Then in June, 1931 l'aumonier-general de l'A.C.J.C., Reverend Father Paré, S.J., visited Edmonton and in addition to reorganizing le Cercle Grandin he set up two new branches at the Juniorate of the Oblates and among the city's young people who had completed their studies.²¹ Although all three branches of the A.C.J.C. henceforth became involved in the social activities of the community, it was the last named branch, le Cercle Bellarmin, which was the most successful. Particularly under the presidency of Lucien Maynard, a former student at the Jesuit College and a graduate in law from the University of Alberta, le Cercle Bellarmin achieved distinction. At the general convention of the A.C.J.C. held in Montreal in July, 1933 it was awarded le

¹⁹ Ibid., 9 nov., 1932.

²⁰ Ibid., 10 mai, 1933.

²¹ Ibid., 14 mai, 1931.

Trophée Vanier for performing the best work of the year among all Canada's branches. The activities for which the award was presented gives a fair idea of the great involvement of the group in promoting the French-speaking presence in Edmonton and Alberta:

Le cercle a obtenu de plusieurs compagnies des annonces françaises pour la radio; il a présenté des requêtes à la commission fédérale de la radio en vue de faire donner au français la part qui lui revient; il a fait des instances auprès du gouvernement provincial afin que celui-ci nommât un second agronome bilingue; il a organisé un concert radiophonique; il a donné quatre cours publics d'économie politique, il a rétabli sur des terres plusieurs Canadiens-français; il a fait une guerre acharnée au blasphème et au communisme.²²

The work of preserving the French identity undertaken by le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' and the A.C.J.C. was complemented by the work of several new organizations which appeared during these years. These new organization included le Cercle des Bonnes Amies, les Jeunes Canadiens, l'Association des Anciens Élèves, le Cercle Dollard des Ormeaux, and l'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta.

The first two organizations were groups created in 1925 by young adults of the French-speaking community. In December, 1925 fifty young French-speaking women met and created under the presidency of Yvonne Sylvestre le Cercle des Bonnes Amies. The goal of the group was "d'aider aux oeuvres patriotiques et religieuses, d'encourager la langue française, et de rassembler la jeunesse canadienne-française

²²Ibid., 12 juillet, 1933.

en lui procurant des divertissements".²³ Les Jeunes Canadiens, a group of young single men created immediately after le Cercle des Bonnes Amies, sought a similar goal. Together the two groups organized many soirées, concerts, and other social events and both cooperated in providing financial aid to many of the French-speaking institutions of the city, particularly during the difficult times of the depression. A further valuable side effect of the activities of these two groups in terms of strengthening the ties of the community was the opportunity their frequent contact provided for the young single men of the community to meet the young single women. Although the creation of romances was not the stated goal of either group, it was undoubtedly in the back of many people's minds and during the period many marriages took place between Bonnes Amies and Jeunes Canadiens.²⁴

Two other organizations among the community's young adults, l'Association des Anciens Élèves and le Cercle Dollard des Ormeaux, appeared about the same time as the foregoing groups. L'Association des Anciens Élèves was begun in June, 1926 when a group of graduates of the Jesuit College met and decided to form an alumni association for social, sport, and theatrical purposes. Since the Jesuit College was considered to be the training ground for the new elite

²³Ibid., 2 sept., 1931.

²⁴Interview with A.-M. Déchène, September 29, 1970.

these men were regarded as an important collection of individuals and much was expected of them. For the most part they lived up to these expectations as in addition to their own social activities they took an important part in many other community activities. For example, in January, 1930 les Anciens Élèves, conscious of the influence they wielded, began the publication of a weekly article in La Survivance explaining the various professions open to young Franco-Albertans.²⁵ Over the course of a few months such former students of the Jesuit College as Paul Poirier, Dr. Bernard Malo, and Reverend Father Roméo Ketchen in turn did a survey of possibilities in the fields of law, medicine, and religious vocations, thereby hoping to stimulate the interest of younger members of the community. Then during the depression when the College was in financial straits l'Association Anciens Élèves undertook a strenuous campaign to keep it solvent. The campaign took the form of a guignolée or house-to-house collection and even though it was the bottom of the depression the hard working canvassers collected close to \$3,000 and saved the College from financial disaster.²⁶

The other group of young people formed in the intensely active 1925-26 period was le Cercle Dollard des

²⁵ La Survivance, 30 janv., 1930.

²⁶ Ibid., 10 mai, 1933 and 25 juillet, 1934.

Ormeaux. Probably as a result of the decline in activity of l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste a group of young people in Immaculate Conception Parish decided in April, 1925 to set up an organization which would perform some of its former functions. The group, under the direction of their president Emile Verreau, chose as their goal "de populariser les héros du Long Sault, de faire célébrer sa fête le 24 mai, et de travailler de concert avec la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste à toutes nos causes nationales, en dehors de la politique".²⁷ The celebration of la fête de Dollard on May 24 for a few years rivalled in popularity the feast of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and in May, 1926 there were over 400 present at the celebrations.²⁸

Although the four new organizations played an important role in promoting the French-speaking presence in Edmonton, their significance was much less than that of the most valuable organization created during this period, l'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta (A.C.F.A.). In fact the creation of the A.C.F.A. was undoubtedly one of the most important landmarks in the retention of French rights and a French identity in both the city and the province to the present day.

The idea of a general organization of all Alberta's French-speaking population had arisen as early as 1909 but

²⁷ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 15 avril, 1925.

²⁸ Ibid., 26 juin, 1926.

due to various factors, especially the war, it had not been fulfilled. After the war the idea had been resurrected but it was not until 1925 that any positive action was taken. The decision to discuss the creation of a general organization at that time was the result of many factors but three in particular seem to stand out. First of all, a general organization would act as a successor to other groups which like l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste seemed to be dying out. Secondly, there was a need for a strong layman's voice to promote French interests in the face of what seemed to be prejudice against the French-speaking clergy by Archbishop O'Leary. Finally, such an organization was necessary to settle dissensions within the community itself caused primarily by political rivalries.²⁹ As a result in April, 1925 a committee of representatives from all over the province met in Edmonton and requested that le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' organize a general convention to decide upon the feasibility of an association.³⁰ The convention, which was attended by 400 delegates, was held in Edmonton on December 13, 1925 and resulted in the choosing of a provisional executive composed of Alex Lefort, Dr. J. E. Amyot, Oliver Lachance, J. A. Cantin, Reverend Father d'Orsonnens, H. E. Patenaude, Mlle. Yvonne Sylvestre, H. de Savoye, Dr. A. Blais, and Reverend

²⁹ Interviews with J. O. Pilon, November 2, 1970 and A.-M. Déchène, September 29, 1970.

³⁰ Interview with Georges Bugnet, September 28, 1970; Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 28 juillet, 1926.

Father Fidèle, O.F.M., of Edmonton; Reverend Father Pilon, Auguste Forget, and Louis Normandeau of Morinville; Reverend Father E. Tessier, Laudus Joly, and Joseph-M. Déchène of Saint Paul; Georges Bugnet of Lac la Nonne; J. A. Rioux of Villeneuve; E. Chevigny of Falher; E. Chartrand of Saint Vincent; P. Gagné of Vimy; and J. R. Laplante of Saint

Lina.³¹ This provisional executive decided to hold a further organizational assembly the following summer in order to give themselves time to establish the groundwork for the association. On July 17, 1926 at this assembly l'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta was officially founded and an executive elected which included Dr. J. E. Amyot as president, T. Gobeil as vice-president, H. de Savoye as secretary, Georges Bugnet as treasurer, and J. A. Rioux as secretary-general.³² Also at this first Congrès de l'A.C.F.A. a constitution was drawn up which organized the association on the basis of les cercles paroissiaux.

The creation of the A.C.F.A. was enthusiastically received by the French-speaking population of Alberta, and by December, 1926 the number of les cercles paroissiaux had already grown to twenty-seven with three of them, Immaculate Conception, Saint Joachim's, and Saint Edmond's, in

³¹Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 23 déc., 1925; La Survivance, 18 déc., 1935.

³²Interview with Georges Bugnet, September 28, 1970; Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 28 juillet, 1926.

Edmonton.³³ Also the annual convention held in Edmonton quickly became an event of great magnitude and throughout the twenties the number of those attending constantly increased until it reached a maximum of 800 at the convention of 1929.³⁴ Of course, the delegates for these conventions came from all over Alberta but the elite of Edmonton's community continued to predominate in the executive positions of the association. During the period there were five presidents of the A.C.F.A. and four of these, Dr. J. E. Amyot, A. Boileau, Dr. J. A. Petitclerc, and Lucien Dubuc, were from Edmonton while Dr. L. O. Beauchemin from Calgary was the fifth. Likewise in the other executive positions the members of Edmonton's community took the leading role as it was usual for around nine of their number to fill the fifteen executive positions. Thus the tendency of the other French-speaking communities of Alberta to look to the elite of the Edmonton community for leadership in French language organizations continued in these years.

It would be impossible to examine all the fields of activity in which the A.C.F.A. engaged since its work embraced every possible facet of the French-speaking community's life. But some achievements do stand out in particular and deserve some special attention. Among these were the

³³ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 1 déc., 1926; La Survivance, 7 fév., 1929.

³⁴ La Survivance, 25 juillet, 1929.

association's concern with the promotion of the French language and culture through the communications media. On November 16, 1928 the A.C.F.A. published the first edition of what was to become Edmonton's most successful and long lived French language newspaper, La Survivance. This was followed in November, 1930 by the beginning of the association's sponsorship of bi-monthly French concerts over radio station C.J.C.A., an event regarded as a great victory in the community.³⁵ Meanwhile in 1929 the association had taken over the promotion of le concours de français and in the next few years substantially increased its scope. In 1929 there were 52 schools involved and 2 bursaries offered but by 1934 there were 3,500 students from 91 schools participating and 4 bursaries offered.³⁶ Other major victories of the A.C.F.A. included the securing of the appointment of a bilingual agronomist, J. H. Tremblay, by the government in June, 1930³⁷ and the creation in 1933, largely through the work of Leo Belhumeur, of l'Avant Gardes de l'A.C.F.A., an organization whose objective was the total education of youth as future citizens and future members of the A.C.F.A.³⁸

In addition to these various ethnic organizations the

³⁵Ibid., 30 nov., 1930.

³⁶Ibid., 15 août, 1934.

³⁷Ibid., 12 juin, 1930.

³⁸Ibid., 18 janv., 1933.

French language press, as in the past, continued to maintain its position as one of the most important unifying forces in the community. During the early twenties L'Union, begun by the Belgian P. Feguenne in November, 1917, was the sole French language organ published in Edmonton. However, by 1928 the A.C.F.A. had grown to such dimensions that its executive felt that the organization should have its own journal and after repeated attempts to buy out L'Union they, as previously mentioned, launched their own weekly La Survivance on November 16, 1928.³⁹ The two papers henceforth ran concurrently until April, 1929 when the competition finally forced L'Union to cease publication.⁴⁰

One of the most colorful personalities associated with Edmonton's French language press during these years was Georges Bugnet. Bugnet was born in Burgundy and worked on various newspapers in France before he and his wife, lured by promises that they could make \$50,000 in five years, came in 1905 to establish themselves on a homestead in the Lac la Nonne area. In 1924 he joined the staff of L'Union as editor-in-chief, succeeding F. X. Boileau, and each week made the trip to Edmonton from his farm to fulfill his duties. In addition to his interest in the newspaper Bugnet was also involved in the social activities of the Edmonton community and he was one of the original instigators of the idea of

³⁹ Ibid., 16 nov., 1928.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18 avril, 1929.

creating the A.C.F.A. He remained with L'Union until 1929 when he resigned because of a dispute with the owner and then returned to the farm where he began writing dramas, poetry, and novels. Several of his novels, of which perhaps the most well-known is la Forêt, were widely acclaimed and gained him somewhat of an international reputation.⁴¹ Furthermore he became a self-taught horticultural expert and succeeded in producing several hybrids of trees and shrubs and two varieties of roses, Lac la Nonne and Therese Bugnet, which were especially adapted to prairie conditions.⁴²

Despite the seeming success of the French language press and the various French language organizations, both old and new, in maintaining the French-speaking identity in Edmonton, by the end of the twenties the former feeling of being a strong identifiable community was beginning to weaken. As previously mentioned, this stemmed partially from changes to the elite of the community but there were also other processes at work. Basically these were related to changes which went far beyond the bounds of the French-speaking community as a separate entity. Despite economic stagnation by the end of the "roaring twenties" the social

⁴¹Bugnet's literary reputation is attested to by the fact that he is mentioned in an article in the authoritative Larousse du xx^e siecle. He is also the subject of a doctoral dissertation--"Georges Bugnet, Homme de Lettres Canadien, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre"--written by Father Jean Papen of Laval University in 1967.

⁴²Interview with Georges Bugnet, September 28, 1970; Fremont, p. 135.

life of the city was much different than in the pre-war years as there was a wider variety of activities which the population indulged in. These included large dances, moving pictures, and just plain joy riding in the fast proliferating motor cars. This promoted a more liberated attitude and made it much more difficult to attract the French-speaking population to the traditional forms of social interaction in the community. By 1929 the press was commenting frequently on the problem of interesting people in parish soirées with so many other amusements available to them.⁴³ The problem was increased with the onset of the depression since people became more concerned with keeping body and soul together than with the retention of their French identity through involvement in the community's activities. For example, even the strongest of the ethnic organizations the A.C.F.A. experienced grave difficulties during the depression. In December, 1932 the organization's president, Lucien Dubuc, warned against the decreasing membership and implored the French population to use the example of their heroic ancestors to survive as an identifiable group through the depression.⁴⁴ In April, 1933 an editorial in La Survivance attacked les cercles paroissiaux of Edmonton for not holding their required assemblies and thereby providing a poor example for the rural ones which looked to them for

⁴³La Survivance, 21 fév., 1929.

⁴⁴Ibid., 28 déc., 1932.

leadership.⁴⁵ Even more foreboding was the fact that the annual convention of the A.C.F.A. held in June, 1934 was attended by an all time low of only fifteen parish branches.⁴⁶

With the beginning of the decline of community identity among the French-speaking population of Edmonton it would seem natural that the position of the elite would be weakened and that their interest in the maintenance of French rights would slacken accordingly. Such was not the case, however, as throughout the period the elite continued to be regarded as the spokesmen for the French-speaking population and they continued to struggle for the retention of French rights. As in the past they operated from the premise that the French-speaking population was a community within a larger community and promoted their presence through the traditional forms of social interaction. Among these the marriages between French and English, the involvement in Edmonton's "society" circles, and the activities associated with the Roman Catholic Church retained their importance. But, as previously, it was the elite's ability to maintain an important position in the city's professional and business community that played a key role in making the French presence felt and their rights accepted by the rest of the population.

⁴⁵Ibid., 26 avril, 1933.

⁴⁶Ibid., 13 juin, 1934.

Since the period from 1918 to 1935 was not an exceptional one for Edmonton from a business viewpoint it was the professional men who were the city's real economic leaders. In the ranks of these professional men French-speaking Edmontonians held their own, especially in the legal and medical professions. First of all, in the legal profession the period saw both the continued success of many previously well-established lawyers and the appearance of many ambitious younger men in this highly competitive occupation. Among the well-established French-speaking members of the Bar two men in particular achieved notable success, L. A. Giroux and Lucien Dubuc. Leonidas Alcide Giroux was born in Quebec and studied at the Seminary of Montreal, the University of Paris, and the University of Louvain before coming to Edmonton to practice law in 1910. Upon his admission to the Bar he joined with Wilfrid Gariépy in November, 1911 in the firm of Gariépy and Giroux. This partnership was dissolved in March, 1914 and Giroux subsequently joined the very successful firm of Bishop, Pratt and Giroux.⁴⁷ Henceforth he built up his reputation as a fine lawyer and became completely involved in the affairs of the French-speaking community. These factors enabled him to win the provincial seat of Grouard for the Liberals in the bye-election of 1924 and started him on a distinguished political

⁴⁷ Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 7 juillet, 1910 and 2 avril, 1914.

career. He soon gained the reputation of being a very outspoken and effective promoter of Alberta's north and from 1931 to 1935 served as the whip of the provincial Liberal party in the Legislature.⁴⁸ Lucien Dubuc, like Giroux, was also a lawyer of long standing stature in Edmonton. He was born in Manitoba in 1877, the son of Sir Joseph Dubuc, a Chief Justice of Manitoba, and studied at the Jesuit College of Saint Boniface. In 1900 he received his law degree from the University of Manitoba and soon after came to Edmonton where after a few years in partnership with his brother he joined with Louis Madore in the firm of Dubuc and Madore.⁴⁹ Thereafter his reputation in the legal field increased over the next decade to the extent that upon the death of Judge J. C. Noël in March, 1920 the choice for a French-speaking member of the Alberta Bench fell upon him.⁵⁰ His first appointment in October, 1920 was to the district north of Edmonton but in February, 1922 he was named "junior" judge of the Edmonton district.⁵¹ In this position he was in May, 1924 the first judge in Alberta's history to hear a case entirely in the French language.⁵²

⁴⁸ La Survivance, 13 fév., 1935.

⁴⁹ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 20 oct., 1920; Le Courrier de l'Ouest, 30 déc., 1909.

⁵⁰ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 20 oct., 1920.

⁵¹ Ibid., 8 fév., 1922.

⁵² Ibid., 14 mai, 1924.

To complement the successes of Giroux, Dubuc, and several other well-established French-speaking lawyers an increasing number of younger men, many of them graduates of the Jesuit College, were admitted to the Bar from the mid-twenties onward. The first of these graduates of the Jesuit College to enter the legal profession in Edmonton was Paul E. Poirier. Poirier was born at Rivière-du-Loup, Quebec in 1901 but came to Edmonton with his parents in 1907. After three years of study at Saint Boniface he entered the Jesuit College of Edmonton where he won the medal of excellence in his class five times before his graduation in 1921.⁵³ Upon his graduation from the University of Alberta in 1924 he joined the firm of Milner, Carr, Dafoe and Poirier and thereafter became one of the community's most successful lawyers and most effective leaders. Other young men from the community following Poirier into the legal profession included C. E. Gariépy, Hormidias Gariépy, Lionel Tellier, Lucien Maynard, and Jean Hétu.

The medical profession tended to follow a pattern similar to that in the legal profession during these years with the numerous successful doctors in Edmonton being joined by new arrivals and new graduates. Perhaps the most notable of the well-established doctors were Dr. Joseph Boulanger, who returned to Paris to take a surgery and

⁵³ Ibid., 4 juin, 1924.

radiography course in September, 1921⁵⁴, and Dr. A. Blais, who was rewarded for his great contribution to the teaching of surgery at the University by being decorated Officier de l'Instruction Publique by the French government in January, 1928⁵⁵. But Drs. Boulanger and Blais shared their top position in the medical field with Dr. Jean Louis Petitclerc who arrived in the city from Quebec in 1920. Petitclerc was a graduate of Laval University who came to Edmonton after serving as a major in the Canadian Army during the First World War. After his arrival he was first associated with Dr. Blais until 1927 when he became an assistant professor of surgery at the University of Alberta. At the same time he became actively involved in all aspects of the French community's life and served as the president of the A.C.F.A. over the particularly difficult period from 1928 to 1932.⁵⁶ In 1932 he was forced to resign his position at the University upon taking on the prestigious post of chief of surgery at the Precious Blood Hospital of Quebec.⁵⁷

Complementing the older doctors in the community were younger men who graduated from the medical school of the University of Alberta. Among these were Drs. Bernard Malo and Charles Lefebvre, both of whom were former students

⁵⁴ Ibid., 21 sept., 1921.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 25 janv., 1928.

⁵⁶ La Survivance, 1 mai, 1932.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 13 juillet, 1932.

at the Jesuit College of Edmonton. Also included was Dr. Emile Verreanu who was born at Bon Accord, Alberta in 1902 but attended the Separate School and Juniorat of Saint John in Edmonton. This amazing young man also graduated from the University of Alberta and at the tender age of twenty-four was named an assistant professor of anatomy at the University, thereby becoming the youngest professor teaching in that institution.⁵⁸

In the business life of Edmonton the members of the community continued to hold their own despite the relative stagnation of the period. The era of great speculation in real estate, resources, and industry was long over and but for a few exceptions members of the community no longer were involved in ventures of this nature. One of the most interesting of the exceptions was Charles E. Barry who was the director of the Coal Valley Mining Company which developed extensive mining operation in the Coal Valley region of the Alberta Coal Branch district. Barry began stripping operations in 1922 and by January, 1923 was employing 100 men, mostly French-Canadians. The mine continued to produce successfully throughout the twenties as Barry constantly introduced new capital in the venture, much of it coming from France.⁵⁹ For the most part, though, the attention of

⁵⁸Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 20 oct., 1926.

⁵⁹A. A. den Otter, "A Social History of the Alberta Coal Branch," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1967), pp. 45, 93.

the French-speaking community tended to focus on what were regarded as the more stable areas of the economy such as retail merchandising. Here they had always been well represented and continued to be so as several new merchants made their appearance. Perhaps the most well-known of these was J. W. Pigeon who bought out the United Tobacco and News Ltd. from J. A. McNeil in 1923. To this was added the Yale Shoe Store in 1931 and both businesses soon became favorite meeting places of French-Edmontonians.⁶⁰ Other successful businesses established in these years included the fur business of "le roi du bison" Louis Trudel, Blais Brothers Battery, Penn Motors Ltd. under the management of E. F. Trudel, and the jewelry shops of P. G. Colbert and Fred Nadon.

From the foregoing study of the French-speaking community's social, religious, and economic life it is obvious that the 1918 to 1935 period differed somewhat from previous years. While the elite continued in its established role as community leaders and as representatives of the French population's interests in the larger community, the French population itself gradually began to lose the feeling of being the tightly-knit group it had once been. This double process also tended to take place in other fields such as politics, colonization, and education. But, as previously, these matters warrant sufficient attention to be studied in a separate section.

⁶⁰La Survivance, 27 janv., 1932 and 26 juin, 1935.

CHAPTER VIII

SIGNS OF DECLINE 1918-1935:

POLITICS, COLONIZATION, AND EDUCATION

During the period from 1905 until the end of the First World War the political life of Edmonton's French-speaking community had followed a fairly clearcut pattern. The community had maintained its interest in representation on City Council, for the most part successfully. In provincial politics its strong support of the Liberals resulted in an unbroken series of victories for the elite of the community as representatives of largely French-speaking rural constituencies and the inclusion of one of these representatives in the cabinet. On the federal level the community's support of the Liberal party resulted in one of their number being appointed as the Senator representing Northern Alberta. In total this continuity of political purpose, especially on the provincial and federal level, was an important factor in the community's retention of both its identity and its rights. During the period from 1918 to 1935, however, this continuity was broken, and even though French-speaking representation continued provincially and federally, the sense of cohesion in the community declined.

The area of civic politics was the first to feel the

break in continuity. As has been pointed out, it has always been one of the prime considerations of the community to have one of their number on Council, a tradition that went all the way back to 1893. There had been periods when there was no such representative but they had always been short and were followed by the re-appearance of a French-speaking alderman. Unfortunately this tradition was broken when H. Milton Martin completed his term of office in 1920. After 1920 no French-speaking alderman succeeded Martin for the remainder of the period and despite the exhortations of the press¹ the French-speaking population seemed to lose interest in the matter.

Despite the decline of interest in civic politics, provincial politics continued to hold the community's attention. At first the provincial situation was no different from that in previous years as the election of 1917 saw the return to Legislature of the five members who had served the previous term, P. E. Lessard, W. Gariépy, L. Boudreau, J.-L. Côté, and J. G. Turgeon. Between this election and that of 1921 there was only one notable change which occurred when Wilfrid Gariépy resigned his new portfolio of Provincial Secretary on September 25, 1918 and returned to Trois Rivières, Quebec, apparently as a result of a promise to him of a sure federal seat there.² Gariépy continued to return

¹La Survivance, 16 oct., 1930.

²L'Union, 1 oct., 1918; Interview with C. E. Gariépy, November 23, 1970.

to Edmonton to represent his constituency until 1921 and later was elected as the federal member for Trois Rivières.³ His replacement in the cabinet was Jean-Leon Côté, the member for Grouard since 1909, who fell heir to the portfolio of Provincial Secretary.⁴

It was the provincial election of 1921 which saw a great change in the community's political representation and the beginning of the breakup of its essential political unity. The years prior to 1921 saw a gradual weakening of the Alberta Liberal Party under the leadership of Charles Stewart due mainly to internal feuds within the party, to the government's inability to deal with the railway, irrigation, and prohibition questions, and to the onset of the post-war recession.⁵ During the same period the ideas of a third party, the United Farmers of Alberta, met with an increasingly enthusiastic reception among the population, and in January, 1919 this essentially class organization decided to become actively involved in politics. Since the U.F.A. was basically a farmer movement and the majority of Franco-Albertans were engaged in agriculture it was inevitable that its ideas would receive some support amongst them. Surprisingly enough the Liberal elite of Edmonton's French-speaking community at first backed them up in this support.

³L. G. Thomas, p. 185.

⁴L'Union, 1 oct., 1918.

⁵L. G. Thomas, p. 189.

For example, as late as the U.F.A. convention of January, 1919 the ideas behind the movement were praised in speeches by such noteworthy French-speaking Liberals as P. E. Les-sard, H. M. Martin, and J. H. Picard.⁶ Such tactics were most likely an attempt to secure Liberal votes and were in line with the government's policy of complying with as many of the U.F.A.'s demands as possible. From November, 1919 onward, after the U.F.A.'s first electoral victory in the Cochrane bye-election, the majority of the political elite of Edmonton's community switched tactics and campaigned actively as Liberals against the U.F.A. As the election drew near all the French-speaking Liberal incumbents signified their intention to run again with the exception of Wilfrid Gariépy whose seat was to be contested by the well-known former Edmonton Liberal Joseph-M. Déchène. But all five of these supposedly safe Liberal seats were also contested by U.F.A. candidates and three of these were French-speaking farmers from the constituency involved; Laudus Joly in Saint Paul-des-Métis, T. Saint-Arnaud in Saint Albert, and Henri Montambeault in Beaver River.⁷

The French-speaking Liberals campaigned much as they had in the past, standing on their record and reminding the French-speaking voters that the best way to survive as a

⁶L'Union, 30 janv., 1919.

⁷Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 21 juillet, 1921.

group was to maintain their unity behind the Liberal party. Typical of the appeals which were made was the speech of J.-L. Côté at the Saint-Jean-Baptiste day celebrations in Edmonton in which it was reported that:

Il insiste à rappeler les vertus de nos ancêtres et la nécessité de les imiter, de ne pas sortir de la voie qu'ils nous ont tracée. C'est le moyen le plus sûr de réussir, de ne pas mourir comme nation...⁸

On their part the French-speaking U.F.A. candidates insisted on the need for farmers to represent farmers and especially farmers who lived in the constituency which they were contesting. The French language press, while attempting to remain as neutral as possible, presumed that the French bloc of Alberta would remain loyal to the Liberals. But an ominous note was sounded by Le Patriote de l'Ouest of Prince Albert which pointed out that while the Liberals had always been sympathetic to the French-Canadians and had reserved a portfolio for them, if the French-speaking population felt that the situation was desperate the U.F.A. could be tried without too many risks.⁹

On the morrow of the election it was apparent that both the provincial Liberal party and the political unity of the provincial French-speaking community had been dealt serious blows. The results showed the return of thirty-nine U.F.A. candidates as compared to fourteen Liberals. Among

⁸Ibid., 29 juin, 1921.

⁹Ibid., 13 juillet, 1921.

these there were two French-speaking Liberals, J.-L. Côté in Grouard and J.-M. Déchène in Beaver River, and two French-speaking United Farmers, L. Joly in Saint Paul and T. Saint-Arnaud in Saint Albert.¹⁰ While in Edmonton itself French-speaking electors had for the most part remained loyal to the Liberals, during the period after the election they tended to follow the example of their rural brethren and polarize around either the Liberals or the U.F.A.¹¹ The consequences of this turn of events were both obvious and far reaching. First of all, whereas during the years when all the French-speaking members were Liberals there existed for the most part a state of political harmony and continuity of purpose within the community now a situation existed which contributed to feelings of rivalry and disunity. The existence of this situation on a provincial scale was disastrous to the continued desire of the French-speaking population to retain a cabinet representative since the government could easily ignore the pleas of a divided group. This is in fact what happened as there was no French-speaking cabinet member appointed during the U.F.A.'s term of office. Secondly, and of equal consequence to Edmonton's community was the decline in importance of the elite of the city as the leaders of the French-speaking community of Alberta as a whole. As previously pointed out the French-speaking

¹⁰ Ibid., 20 juillet, 1921.

¹¹ Interview with Georges Bugnet, September 28, 1970.

representatives had either been members of the Edmonton community like W. Gariépy, P. E. Lessard, and J.-L. Côté or like L. Boudreau and J. G. Turgeon had taken some part in its social and economic activities. After 1921 this situation was not nearly as common as the U.F.A. members tended to be drawn from the rural French-speaking communities and had no connections with Edmonton's community. Meanwhile French-speaking Liberals had realized that to ensure future victories they, like the U.F.A. candidates, would need to become more closely associated with the members of their constituency. Considerations of this nature played a major part in the decision of Joseph-M. Déchène, a long time Liberal supporter and one of the foremost members of the community's elite, to leave Edmonton in 1919 to live in Therien.¹² Thus the position of Edmonton's French-speaking community and more particularly the position of the elite of this community as political leaders of the whole provincial French population drastically deteriorated. In conjunction with the upsurge of political rivalry and disunity this removed a key support of the maintenance of the Edmonton community's identity.

These tendencies initiated by the election of 1921 continued to develop between 1921 and 1930 as the division in representation continued. In July, 1924 the prominent Edmonton lawyer L. A. Giroux ran in a bye-election in

¹²Interview with A.-M. Déchène, September 29, 1970.

Grouard to replace J.-L. Côté who had just been appointed to the Senate and his victory maintained the balance of French-speaking members at two Liberals and two U.F.A.¹³ This balance was again maintained in the election of 1926 with the victories of the Liberals L. A. Giroux in Grouard and L. Boudreau in Saint Albert and the United Farmers L. Joly in Saint Paul and A. Delisle in Beaver River.¹⁴ After 1930, however, it began to appear as if the French-speaking population might overcome their political disunity and once again unite behind the Liberals. The first hint of this came in the election of June, 1930 when only one French-speaking U.F.A. candidate, the former Liberal Omer St. Germain, succeeded in being elected in Saint Albert as compared with the three French-speaking Liberal members, L. A. Giroux in Grouard, J.-M. Déchène in Saint Paul, and H. H. Dakin in Beaver River.¹⁵ From this time onward support for the U.F.A. lessened noticeably and in February, 1932 St. Germain broke party lines to vote with the Liberals on the motion of L. A. Giroux to eliminate a clause stipulating three years of Alberta residency in the granting of homesteads.¹⁶ But the real turning point came after January,

¹³ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 16 juillet, 1924.

¹⁴ Ibid., 14 juillet, 1926.

¹⁵ La Survivance, 28 août, 1930; La Survivance maintained that even though Dakin was a Scotsman he spoke French and received a French language newspaper in his home and therefore qualified as a French-speaking member.

¹⁶ Ibid., 17 fév., 1932.

1933 when the U.F.A. formally affiliated itself with the newly created Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. The C.C.F. had been born at the Calgary conference of August, 1932 and it was bitterly attacked by the French language press of Edmonton which warned that it was a dangerous party since it could be socialist or communist and therefore opposed to the interests of French-speaking Catholics.¹⁷ St. Germain was thus put in the rather awkward position of being identified with a party unacceptable to the French-speaking population as Catholics. Therefore in February, 1934, after the announcement of the U.F.A.'s intention to cooperate with the C.C.F. in the choice of candidates for the federal election, he announced his decision to defect to the Liberals, using as an excuse his feeling that the Brownlee administration was a class government and that the C.C.F. was communist inspired.¹⁸

With St. Germain's decision all French-speaking members were once more Liberals and the opportunity was present for the French-speaking population once again to unite as a group behind them. But the seeming Liberal predominance was at best artificial and French-speaking voters no longer felt themselves part of a homogeneous group capable of forming a power bloc as they had in the period between 1905 and 1918. Thus in the campaign of 1935 party strife once again rent

¹⁷Ibid., 14 déc., 1932.

¹⁸Ibid., 28 fév., 1934.

the community as a struggle developed between the Liberals and the new party of monetary reform, Social Credit.

The Social Credit party had a strong French-speaking voice in the person of Lucien Maynard, a former student of the Jesuit College who practiced law in Saint Paul. Maynard had become a Social Crediter mainly because he felt that the teachings of Major Douglas, the original formulator of Social Credit theories, were in line with those of the Catholic Church, especially as contained in the Papal Encyclicals Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno.¹⁹ Once convinced of the efficacy of the movement he became an indefatigable worker on its behalf and was actively engaged in organizing the Saint Paul and Beaver River constituencies. This work payed off in the election of August, 1935 as Maynard won the Beaver River seat and J. W. Beaudry the Saint Paul seat for Social Credit. On the other hand L. A. Giroux, the Liberal whip for the preceding five years, was returned in Grouard²⁰, and the community was once again thrown back to the 1921 situation of divided loyalties.

In federal politics the appearance of third parties caused a reaction in the community fairly similar to that it had caused in provincial politics. Prior to the federal election of December, 1921 Franco-Albertans had generally

¹⁹J. A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), p. 216.

²⁰La Survivance, 21 août, 1935.

remained staunch Liberal supporters, and although there was some uncertainty as to the reception of the National Progressive Party, it was felt that the "shadow of Laurierism" would keep many loyal to the Liberals.²¹ This is basically what happened as although both of Edmonton's federal seats were won by Progressives the results showed that Frank Oliver, the Liberal running in Edmonton West, received a majority of the votes in most French-speaking centers.²² However the split caused by the provincial election of 1921 was obviously having its effect as Oliver won by a much slimmer margin than previously in these areas. After the election of 1921 the polarization of Franco-Albertans, including those of Edmonton, around federal Liberals and Progressives became as common as in the provincial field. By 1935 this polarization, again as in provincial politics, had switched from the Progressives and Liberals to the Social Crediters and Liberals. The fast growing support for Social Credit among northern French-speaking communities after the August, 1935 provincial election was manifested in the October federal election when the Social Credit candidate René Pelletier running in Athabaska became the first French-Canadian living in Alberta to win a seat in the House of Commons.²³

²¹Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 30 nov., 1921.

²²Edmonton Bulletin, Jan. 9, 1921.

²³L. H. Drouin, ed., History of Saint Paul, Alberta, 1909-1959 (n.p.: Saint Paul Journal, 1960), p. 101.

Before Pelletier's victory in the 1935 election the French-speaking population, as in the past, continued to hope for the appointment of one of their number to the Senate to represent their interests on the federal level. During the 1918 to 1935 period two of the elite of the Edmonton community, J.-L. Côté and P. E. Lessard, had the honor to fulfill this function. When Senator Philippe Roy had resigned in 1911 his seat in the Senate had been filled by A. E. Forget, a former Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories and the first Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan in 1905.²⁴ Upon Forget's death in 1923 the matter of his successor was much debated and it was felt by many people that the position would probably go to Frank Oliver. But Oliver realized the importance of having a French-speaking senator to represent Northern Alberta and he let it be known that he favored such an appointment.²⁵ As a result in August, 1923 J.-L. Côté of Edmonton was appointed to fill the vacancy. Unfortunately Côté died in September, 1924 after serving only one year, and immediately speculation as to a successor once more became a chief topic of discussion. Any fears in the community were once again allayed with the announcement of the appointment of P. E. Lessard to the Senate in September, 1925.²⁶ Lessard served with distinction

²⁴ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 13 juin, 1923.

²⁵ Ibid., 27 juin, 1923.

²⁶ Ibid., 16 sept., 1925.

until his death in April, 1931 when his popularity as a leader of the French-speaking community was attested to by what La Survivance claimed was the greatest manifestation of sympathy which had ever been accorded a French-Canadian in Alberta's history.²⁷ Although after Lessard's death the community again expressed the hope that the tradition of a French-speaking Senator from Alberta would be maintained, the Conservatives, either because of a lack of a suitable candidate or a feeling that Alberta's French bloc no longer warranted consideration, passed over them. In July, 1931 the appointment of Pat Burns to the Senate maintained the Catholic principle but not the French-speaking one. The community was able to take some comfort in the news that at the same time a French-speaking resident of Saskatchewan, Arthur Marcotte, had also been named to the Senate.²⁸

It is obvious that in total the experience of Edmonton's French-speaking community with politics during the 1918 to 1935 period was somewhat less auspicious than in previous years. While at least some of the members of the elite continued to be respected representatives either in the Provincial Legislature or the Senate, the split along party lines caused the community to lose some of its cohesion. But problems were not restricted to the political

²⁷La Survivance, 16 avril, 1931.

²⁸Ibid., 9 juillet, 1931.

field alone as the community also had to deal with difficulties in what were regarded as two other important areas of concern in the continuance of ethnic survival--colonization and education.

During the war years immigration to the Canadian West had come to a virtual standstill and in Edmonton itself the population had even decreased substantially. But by the beginning of the twenties it was felt that with the aid of such new groups as the newly formed Western Canada Colonization Association immigration would soon return to normal.²⁹ This expected return to pre-war conditions did not immediately materialize as the population of the province had only increased to 607,599 in 1926 from 588,454 in 1921, a rate of growth less than the birth rate.³⁰ The situation began to change after 1926, largely due to an influx of Central Europeans, and by 1931 Alberta's population stood at 731,605 and Edmonton's at 79,197.³¹ Yet as early as 1929 with poor crops and the onset of the economic difficulties of the depression the authorities had begun to realize that the prairie provinces needed no more immigrants for the present time.³² Steps were taken to curtail unwanted population increases, the most effective of them

²⁹Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 14 juillet, 1920.

³⁰Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, p. xlii;
Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 25 janv., 1928.

³¹Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, pp. xlii-vi.

³²La Survivance, 8 août, 1929.

being the transfer of natural resources to the provincial governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan in October, 1930. This ended the federal government's homestead policy, and in February, 1931 the Alberta government introduced new legislation which required that an applicant be seventeen years of age, a British subject, and a resident of Alberta for five years before a homestead would be granted.³³ Although the residency clause was later reduced to three years, the legislation on the whole had the desired effect of slowing down immigration into the province.

These difficulties and changes in the immigration situation during this period had their effect on the French-speaking community. To a great degree the general French-speaking population lost interest in colonization, perhaps a manifestation of the weakening of community ties. For example, le Bureau de Colonisation de l'Alberta which had received such widespread support in the community had ceased to operate during the war and after 1918 no attempt was made to revive it. In fact the only colonization organization which members of the French-speaking community were involved in during the period, the Edmonton Colonization Society, was not begun until 1929 and even then it was strictly a business venture undertaken by men of various ethnic backgrounds. The Society's list of officers included A. Boileau as president and manager, John Hawrelak as director of colonization

³³Ibid., 19 fév., 1931.

services, C. E. Gariépy as secretary, and a consulting committee composed of P. E. Lessard, L. A. Giroux, John McIntosh, and G. M. Van Allen.³⁴ These men hoped to receive sums of money from the railway companies for each group of colonists brought from the East³⁵, but unfortunately for them the company was formed on the eve of changes in the homestead law and its existence was short lived.

If the difficulties with immigration caused the general French-speaking population to lose interest in the promotion of colonization such was not the case with the sector of the elite which had always viewed French Catholic colonization as a holy cause--the clergy. Although the French clergy were somewhat hampered in their activities because of their decrease in number, they were at least successful in maintaining a missionnaire-colonisateur for the Edmonton district at the Canadian Immigration Bureau in Montreal. This position was filled by Reverend Father J. A. Ethier until May, 1924 when he was replaced by Reverend Father Avila Lepage.³⁶ In addition, a priest long known in the Edmonton area, Reverend Father J. A. Ouellette, served as the director of all Canada's missionnaires-colonisateurs between 1922 and 1929.³⁷ For the most part these priests

³⁴ Ibid., 28 fév., 1929.

³⁵ Interview with Mrs. J. E. Hart, September 25, 1970.

³⁶ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 14 mai, 1923.

³⁷ La Survivance, 9 mai and 10 oct., 1929.

tended to operate as they always had although there were some new methods attempted to attract prospective colonists. Among the most successful of these was la Liaison Française, a yearly railway excursion originating in Quebec that visited various western French-speaking centers. The first of these was organized by Father Ouellette in July, 1924³⁸ but after a few years of operation they were replaced by les Voyages La Survivance which were reciprocal excursions by western French-Canadians back to Quebec.³⁹

After the beginning of the depression the clergy, fearing the decline of the French identity, became particularly active in opposing the ending of immigration. This opposition was voiced in numerous articles appearing in La Survivance and at many conferences held to discuss the issue.⁴⁰ When it became apparent that steps were to be taken to halt the flow of colonists, appeals were made to the French population to remain a united group until the crisis was over. As early as August, 1929 the clergy was calling on the people not to sell their farms to other nationalities as it would break up French-speaking parishes.⁴¹ Then in May, 1931 they began a program of retour

³⁸ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 9 juillet, 1924.

³⁹ Ibid., 5 oct., 1927.

⁴⁰ La Survivance, 12 fév., 1931.

⁴¹ Ibid., 8 août and 19 déc., 1929.

à la terre, an appeal against moving from the country to the city and thereby worsening the unemployment situation.⁴²

One other sector of the elite which remained conscious of the need for continued promotion of colonization were the French-speaking politicians. Prior to the changing of the homestead laws the provincial members were, of course, interested in colonization but since it was a federal matter they could not really become involved politically. After the transfer of natural resources in October, 1930, however, this became one of their areas of keenest interest. When the provincial government introduced new homestead legislation in February, 1931 the French-speaking Liberal members opposed the residency clause since it was felt that it put the French-Canadian on the same level as a European immigrant and that it took no consideration of French-Canadians who had already proved themselves in the East.⁴³ Upon the introduction of the bill in Legislature L. A. Giroux moved an amendment which in effect requested that the three year residency clause be eliminated.⁴⁴ Although his amendment was defeated, it did not end attempts at revision. In February, 1932 after a resolution requesting the elimination of the clause was forwarded to the government by the A.C.F.A.

⁴²Ibid., 21 mai, 1931.

⁴³Ibid., 9 avril, 1931.

⁴⁴Ibid., 2 avril, 1931.

a motion to the same effect was introduced in the Legislature, again by L. A. Giroux. This motion met the same fate as Giroux's earlier amendment as it was voted down forty-one to twelve, but the unity of the French-speaking politicians on the issue was shown when the U.F.A. member O. St. Germain broke party ranks to vote with the French-speaking Liberals.⁴⁵

Although on the whole the 1918 to 1935 period was not a promising one for French-speaking colonization, the hard work of the missionnaires-colonisateurs and a relatively high birth rate enabled the French-speaking segment of Alberta's population to retain its standing in the total provincial population. Between the years 1921 and 1936 their numbers increased from 30,913 to 39,800⁴⁶, remaining fairly constant at about 5.2 per cent of the total population. In Edmonton itself the increase for the same period was from 2,707 to 4,177⁴⁷ representing a slight gain from 4.6 to 4.9 per cent of the total civic population. As encouraging as this gain might have seemed it was regarded as unimportant since during the same span of time the French-speaking community fell from second to fourth place in terms of identifiable ethnic groups in the city behind the Germans

⁴⁵ Ibid., 3 and 17 fév., 1932.

⁴⁶ Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, p. 899.

⁴⁷ Census of Canada, 1921, pp. 542-43; Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, p. 1008.

and Ukrainians.⁴⁸ French-Edmontonians had always been proud of their position as the city's second largest ethnic group and this decline in status could not help but be regarded as a serious development.

As with colonization there were also difficulties in some aspects of the educational field between 1918 and 1935. Yet unlike the colonization situation where there was much indifference on the part of the general French-speaking population, the community retained its interest in all areas of French language and Catholic education. In fact during this period and subsequently involvement in the educational field was a primary factor in the French-speaking community's ability to retain what remained of their distinct identity. Again it was mainly through the activity of the elite that this was made possible.

Representation on the Separate School Board had, of course, always been a primary consideration in the fight to maintain French language educational rights. Until 1926 the community was successful in consistently maintaining three members on the seven member board. From 1918 to 1924 the three were J. H. Gariépy, J. H. Picard, and Paul Jenvrin but after 1924 Garipéy's place was taken by C. E. Barry.⁴⁹ Then in the election of 1926 only two French-speaking trustees were returned, C. E. Barry and C. E. Gariépy. Gariépy

⁴⁸Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, p. 1008.

⁴⁹Henderson's Edmonton Director 1918 to 1926.

continued as a trustee for the remainder of the period while Barry was replaced in 1927 by J. O. Pilon who also served until the end of the period.⁵⁰ This reduction of French representation to two members in 1926 was a serious weakening of their position and it is probably no coincidence that it was about the same time that some difficulties began to develop between the French and Irish trustees. Ill will was aroused mainly by the feeling of the French trustees that their just demands for the hiring of French-speaking teachers were being ignored by the majority of the board.⁵¹ As time went on the situation improved substantially as Gariépy and Pilon became better known and used their influence on the Irish trustees and when some of the latter were replaced by men of more vision.⁵² By the end of the period there was actually a surplus of French-speaking teachers, and upon the election of C. E. Gariépy as president of the board in 1935 an Irish trustee, D. Tighe, expressed his conviction that since the French were one-third of the Catholic population of Edmonton one of their number should have the presidency of the board every third year.⁵³

⁵⁰ Henderson's Edmonton Directory 1926 to 1936;
Interview with J. O. Pilon, November 2, 1970.

⁵¹ Interview with J. O. Pilon, November 2, 1970; Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 23 déc., 1925.

⁵² Interview with Father Roméo Ketchen, October 2, 1970.

⁵³ La Survivance, 27 nov., 1935.

The action of French representatives on the Separate School Board in support of the use of French in the schools and the hiring of French teachers was seconded by an organization of these French-speaking teachers themselves. This organization known as l'Association des Institutueurs Bilingues de l'Alberta (A.I.B.A.) was created as a branch of the A.C.F.A. shortly after its own formation in 1926.⁵⁴ Under the leadership of its president Rosaire Racette, a graduate of the Jesuit College, its main function was to attempt to ensure the proper teaching of French in the province but it also for a number of years took upon itself the task of helping to organize le concours de français.⁵⁵ By 1928 the A.I.B.A. had reached its apogee with sixty-four active participants but unfortunately thereafter it declined in size and importance with the difficulties of the depression and disappeared altogether in the early thirties. It was later revived again, however, under the new title of l'Association des Educateurs bilingues de l'Alberta.

As in the case of colonization, educational matters also became the concern of the French-speaking politicians in this period. Of course the political elite had always been concerned with the protection of French Catholic rights in this area but from 1905 onward no major issues required

⁵⁴Ibid., 9 mai, 1929.

⁵⁵Ibid., 11 avril, 1929.

their attention. But between 1918 and 1935 two issues did arise, one which was settled very satisfactorily and the other rather less satisfactorily to the community.

The first of the two issues had to do with the teaching of the primary French course which was allowed under the terms of the Autonomy Acts. As previously mentioned, the French-speaking community was fairly satisfied that these allowed them a primary course in French but they were not necessarily satisfied with the government's interpretation of what this meant. The question had come up many times in the past but it was not until a new French program was officially granted in Saskatchewan in April, 1925 that le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc' requested the French-speaking members to take it up with the government.⁵⁶ After the request the member for Saint Paul, Laudus Joly, saw the Minister of Education, Perrin Baker, and persuaded him to review Section 184 of the School Ordinance and give his interpretation of it. Upon the visit of other French-speaking representatives Baker agreed to consult with the French-speaking school trustees in making his decision⁵⁷, and when this decision was finally announced it was an obvious victory for the community. The new instructions which came into effect on September 1, 1925 specified that:

In all schools in which the board by resolution decides to offer a primary course in French, in accord-

⁵⁶Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 8 avril, 1925.

⁵⁷Ibid., 16 sept., 1925.

ance with Section 184 of the School Ordinance, French shall be for the French-speaking children one of the authorized subjects of study and may be used as a medium of instruction for other subjects for the first year. Oral English must, however, from the beginning be included in the curriculum as a subject of study.

During the second year and after the child has learned to read in the mother tongue the formal teaching of reading in English shall be begun.

From Grade III on, a period not exceeding one hour each day may be allotted to the teaching of French. The term "French" as herein used shall include reading, language study, grammar, analysis, dictation and composition.

Teachers may offer explanations in the mother tongue when necessary.⁵⁸

The success of the community in obtaining a clearly defined and practical interpretation of Section 184 of the School Ordinance was not altogether duplicated on the second educational issue which received the attention of French-speaking politicians--the centralization of schools. Early in 1929 Education Minister Baker introduced a bill in the Legislature which was aimed at centralizing the province's numerous small school divisions into twenty large districts.⁵⁹ The French-speaking community was opposed to the legislation, known as the "Bill Baker", ostensibly because it would remove some local autonomy and because there was some uncertainty as to the hiring of French teachers under the new system.⁶⁰ In reality, the major factor in their opposition was a fear that if larger divisions were created it could not be assured that some of them would remain under

⁵⁸Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Sessional Papers, 1925, Vol. XX, part 2.

⁵⁹La Survivance, 18 avril, 1929.

⁶⁰Ibid., 21 mars, 1929.

French control, as was the case in several smaller divisions. This in turn would put an end to a practice common in many of the schools in predominantly French rural areas whereby French was used as the language of instruction beyond the one hour a day allowed by the regulations.⁶¹ As a result the French-speaking Liberals worked hard at trying to kill the bill, and in cooperation with other dissentient elements they were successful in arousing sufficient opposition to have it dropped for the 1929 session.⁶² In the 1930 session a modified "Bill Baker" was re-introduced and although it included provisions for a plebiscite before a new division was established, it was still found to be unacceptable by the majority of the community. The French-speaking Liberals once again led the opposition to the legislation and this time they were joined by the French-speaking United Farmers, Joly and Delisle, who broke party lines to vote with the Liberals in favor of an amendment to appoint a committee to study the question.⁶³ Once again this opposition was successful in helping to have the bill withdrawn after second reading. However, when a new bill was again introduced in the 1931 session the French-speaking members, realizing that they had achieved as many modifications as possible under

⁶¹Interviews with Father Ludovic LaRose, O.M.I., October 1, 1970 and A.-M. Déchène, September 29, 1970.

⁶²La Survivance, 18 avril, 1929.

⁶³Ibid., 20 mars, 1930.

the circumstances, voted with the rest of the Assembly in favor of the legislation. Although this ensured the creation of the larger divisions that they had originally opposed, some comfort could be taken from the fact that the regulations with regard to French remained unchanged and that there was provisions for a plebiscite upon a petition from twenty-five per cent of the rate payers in a district.⁶⁴

Finally, one further area of French language education remains to be studied--the institutions themselves where French was used as a language of instruction. The previous period had seen the establishment of two bilingual colleges in Edmonton, the Juniorat of Saint John the Apostle and the Jesuit College, both of which continued to develop between 1918 and 1935. Especially successful was the Jesuit College which carried on its role as a training ground for the elite. In 1921 the College, which was officially affiliated with the Arts department of Laval University, gave its first set of university level final examinations and five students were granted their Bachelor of Arts degrees, Paul Poirier, Roméo Ketchen, Adrien Voyer, Fanning Boileau, and Ellis Brown.⁶⁵ Meanwhile enrollment at the College increased steadily and by 1927 there were 160 students from five provinces in attendance.⁶⁶ A further milestone was reached in

⁶⁴Statutes of Alberta, 21 Geo. V., c. 32, s. 12-27.

⁶⁵Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 6 juillet, 1921.

⁶⁶Ibid., 5 oct., 1927.

1929 when three former students of the College, Reverend Fathers Robert Picard, S.J., Auteuil Richard, S.J., and Prosper Bernard, S.J., joined its staff.⁶⁷

It was apparent by the twenties that some institution comparable to the Jesuit College was needed to educate young French-speaking girls in Edmonton. In 1925 Reverend Father Auguste Bernier, the curé of Immaculate Conception Parish, received permission from Archbishop O'Leary to bring some Sisters of the Assumption (Soeurs de l'Assomption de Nicolet) to Edmonton to begin the establishment of a convent. After their arrival a funds subscription was organized and the five storey Convent of the Assumption was built on 98 Street and 108 Avenue. It opened its doors in September, 1926 with sixty students in attendance and offered a commercial course in addition to a regular course taught in both languages but mainly in French.⁶⁸ The year 1925 also saw the opening of another boys' college offering a bilingual course, Saint Anthony's College. The College was begun by the Franciscan Fathers on 67 Street and 129 Avenue and by its second year of operation there were twenty-seven students in attendance receiving their education in both English and French.⁶⁹ After a few years of operation on

⁶⁷ La Survivance, 8 août, 1929.

⁶⁸ Le Patriote de l'Ouest, 6 oct., 1926; La Survivance, 31 janv., 1929.

⁶⁹ La Survivance, 16 sept., 1931; Maclean, p. 116.

a bilingual basis French was gradually phased out and the College became strictly English.

In the final analysis, by the end of the period from 1918 to 1935 it is obvious that despite some very real accomplishments the French-speaking community was not what it had once been. By a combination of factors, many outside their control, the French-speaking population had lost some of their former feeling of being part of a united, identifiable, and influential ethnic group in the city. Yet even if there were some signs of decline there were also some signs of hope. Among these the existence of French organizations, French parishes, French educational institutions and the continued French participation in politics ensured that the community would not soon disappear altogether. In fact these factors in conjunction with the continued influential position of the elite in the city's business and professional community and the continued interest of this elite in maintaining French rights made the future seem bright indeed.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The year 1935 may in many ways seem a very unsuitable date to end a study of the French-speaking community of Edmonton. Yet on the whole the pattern established in the previous years was perpetuated after 1935 and further study in detail would be rather repetitive in nature. For the most part the period from 1918 to 1935 set the tone for the future and the community was never to return to the strong, closely-knit entity that it had once been. The most conspicuous manifestation of this is perhaps evident in the fact that at the present time when French-Edmontonians number about 25,000 only approximately 5,000 of them still associate themselves with French-speaking parishes.¹ However, it is also undeniable that to some extent French-Edmontonians have been able to maintain a measure of their identity since 1935. This has been largely due to a variety of factors that were present prior to 1935 and have continued to remain in play. In retrospect it appears as if the most important of these factors has been the continued existence of an elite. This elite has continued to take upon itself the task of ensuring the existence of a French identity and

¹Interview with Reverend Father J. Roméo Ketchen, October 2, 1970.

the maintenance of French rights and has also been able to retain its influence in the religious, political, and economic life of the city and province.

First of all, the French-speaking clergy has continued, although perhaps to a lesser degree than previously, to attempt to keep the French Catholic population aware of its separate identity. The French-speaking parish has remained the basis for their work and in an attempt to extend this work two new parishes have been established in Edmonton since 1935, Sainte Anne's in 1951 and Saint Thomas d'Aquin in 1960. In addition the clergy has continued to provide the inspiration and leadership for the numerous Church organizations which have always played such a key role in the maintenance of a French Catholic identity. In terms of the non-religious sector of the elite, the politicians and the business and professional men of the community have worked toward similar ends. Although French-speaking politicians have not been quite as numerous as before, men such as C. E. Gariépy in civic politics, Lucien Maynard in provincial politics, J.-M. Déchène in federal politics, and Dr. A. Blais in the Senate were throughout their long terms of office active representatives of the French-speaking point of view. Likewise, French-speaking business and professional men have succeeded in using their influence to further the French cause. This has been done through their business and social contacts with influential people in the city and province

and through organizations like the A.C.F.A. in whose functioning they have played a major role. Their combined success in this endeavor has perhaps been at no time more evident than at present with the opening of a French language television station in Edmonton in 1970 and the approval for beginning a French language high school in the near future.

It is difficult to estimate whether any identifiable French-speaking community would have remained in Edmonton today had not the continuity in the elite been perpetuated for approximately the last century. Given its important leadership in all spheres of activity, it seems doubtful. Throughout its history the French-speaking community's interest in their identity and rights often tended to wane and it was only through the influence and hard work of the elite that the idea of an identifiable French population possessing certain rights remained alive. In the community today there is an awareness that this has been the case and a seeming determination among the community's leaders to continue to promote the French presence through traditional methods. These men have for the most part a well developed sense of their history and realize that the key to success, even as it was during the days of far-sighted individuals such as Senator Philippe Roy, is cooperation, not confrontation. The relations between French and English in Edmonton have not been without some difficulties over the years but generally speaking due to the moderate approach of the French

toward their desires and the presence of open-minded individuals on both sides there have been few problems of a serious nature. Thus the elite today know that they must use their influence but that they must use it subtly. Only in the continuance of generally amicable relations between the small French-speaking minority and the rest of the population does hope for future French successes remain.

Beyond its significance for the French-Edmontonian of today what is to be learned from a study of the history of the French-speaking community of Edmonton? Historically speaking it may on first appearance seem a restricted study of one small, insignificant and isolated group but upon closer examination it takes on much wider implications. As mentioned in the Preface the French-speaking community of Edmonton was not entirely a typical one but it did express characteristics found in many French-speaking communities in the lands formerly composing the North-West Territories. As such it provides in some of its aspects a microcosm of the entire French experience in the region.

In the first place, the early history of the French presence in and around the fur posts of Forts Edmonton-Augustus was fairly analogous to that of other fur posts scattered throughout the North West. Prior to 1821 all the North West Company posts employed French-Canadian voyageurs as their servants and after the union of the two companies' it was common, as at Edmonton House, for French-Canadians

and French-speaking Métis to be the employees of Hudson's Bay Company posts. When French-speaking Roman Catholic missionaries appeared on the scene they visited all these posts and helped ensure the continuance of a French Catholic identity throughout the West. But it is after the beginning of organized French-speaking colonization that the most interesting similarities between the Edmonton community and the numerous new French-speaking communities which were established become apparent. Several areas in particular show definite analogies and require at least brief examination.

Perhaps one of the most striking similarities between Edmonton and these other communities was in the sequence of events in the formation of a French community identity. The first manifestation of the French presence in Edmonton settlement had become apparent in 1877 with the erection of Saint Joachim's Church outside the walls of Edmonton House. This church immediately became the focal point around which the French population's religious and social life revolved. This situation tended to be duplicated in other French-speaking communities. Since the objective of the French-speaking clergy, who were mainly responsible for bringing out new colonists, was to minimize the difference between the old Quebec environment and the new western one, their first task was the creation of a French-speaking parish in each district. As with Saint Joachim's the parish church in each of these communities immediately became the focal point of the

French population's religious and social activities. A further event of great magnitude in the formation of a community identity for French-Edmontonians after the creation of a French-speaking parish had been the beginning of a local Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society in 1894. Here again this action was reproduced in many other French-speaking centers of Alberta and Saskatchewan as the population began to feel the need for a further demonstration of their particular ethnic identity.

In addition to the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society there also tended to be a similarity in the types of French language organizations which appeared in Edmonton and other communities. This was true with regard to Church and social groups, with regard to mutual societies which were imported from Quebec, and with regard to provincial organizations. First of all, in terms of Church and social groups most French-speaking communities had, although often under a variety of different names, comparable versions of such Edmonton organizations as les Dames de l'Autel de Saint Joachim's and le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc'. Secondly, as to the two mutual societies which appeared in Edmonton in 1911, les Artisans Canadiens-français and l'Alliance Nationale, both were also established in many other western French-speaking centers. Organizers for the two societies travelled the prairie provinces in 1911-12, and in addition to the branches installed in various Albertan French-speaking communities, some success was also had in Saskatchewan communities.

Branches of les Artisans Canadien-français were set up in Duck Lake, Marcelin, Big River, and Prince Albert while l'Alliance Nationale established in Duck Lake, Vonda, and Howell (Prud'homme).² Finally, with regard to provincial organizations there were many exact parallels between the experiences of Edmonton's community with the A.C.F.A. and those of other French-speaking communities in Alberta. This is not surprising since many communities took part in the organization of the A.C.F.A. during 1925-26 and all les cercles paroissiaux were set up on exactly the same basis and were concerned with exactly the same problems as those in Edmonton. Some parallels are also apparent between l'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta and l'Association Catholique Franco-Canadienne de la Saskatchewan (A.C.F.C.) created in 1912-13. Like the A.C.F.A., the A.C.F.C. was organized in a system of local branches (known as les groupes locaux), it had the same major objective of protecting the French identity and French rights in the province, and it had a French language newspaper, Le Patriote de l'Ouest, which, like La Survivance for the A.C.F.A., acted as the organization's voice.³

A third area in which analogies may be seen between

²R. J. A. Huel, "L'Association Catholique Franco-Canadienne De La Saskatchewan: A Response To Cultural Assimilation, 1912-34," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1969), p. 37.

³Ibid., pp. 44-48, 67.

Edmonton and other French-speaking communities was in the outlook and attitudes of the population. Basically there was a common realization that the continued maintenance of a French-speaking identity in the West depended upon the protection of the rights which remained to them. Thus the concern with the status of the French language and with French Catholic educational rights evident in Edmonton's community was reflected in other French-speaking communities throughout the lands that became Alberta and Saskatchewan. This was apparent as early as 1892 when the members of the Legislative Assembly for the constituencies of Prince Albert and Batoche, which both had substantial French-speaking populations, voted with Antonio Prince, the Edmonton lawyer representing Saint Albert constituency, in favor of an amendment not to change the status of the French language in the North-West Territories. Similar unity of opinion was expressed on other language and educational issues which arose prior to the granting of provincial status in 1905. Although after 1905 the course of events in Alberta and Saskatchewan differed substantially with regard to Roman Catholic and French language education, the determination to retain remaining French Catholic rights expressed in the Edmonton community was still everywhere present. In addition to the interest expressed in retaining their educational rights there was also after 1905 a common concern in the communities of both provinces with improving the quality of French language education. This took the form of an attempt to recruit

or train more bilingual teachers, to secure the appointment of bilingual school inspectors, and to establish French language colleges.

The similarity in outlook between French-Edmontonians and the population of other French-speaking communities also for many years extended to the realm of politics. As has been pointed out, until 1920 the French-speaking people of Edmonton were predominantly supporters of the Liberal party, both on a provincial and federal level, mainly because they felt that their rights would be best protected by this party. This preference was reflected, if not magnified, in the rural French-speaking communities of Alberta as shown by the election of Liberals, French-speaking in the case of provincial elections and English-speaking in the case of federal elections, in the constituencies where French-speaking voters formed either a majority or a large proportion of the electorate. In Saskatchewan this same preference for the Liberals was expressed by French-speaking voters. In fact in Saskatchewan the continuity of support for the Liberals remained unbroken until the thirties⁴ whereas in Alberta there tended to be a split in support between the Liberals and Progressives after 1920.

Finally, a study of Edmonton's French-speaking community provides an example of the French experience in urban centers. There was of course in some of its aspects a great

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

deal of difference between the French experience in rural communities where they usually formed a majority of the population and that in urban communities where after the turn of the century they always formed only a small minority. The urban situation required much more vigilance and activity on the part of the French population if they were to maintain their identity and it also required a greater degree of effort to maintain good relations with the other sectors of the population. But the urban centers also tended to attract many of the well-educated and well-trained French-speaking people coming West and these people were equipped to handle the urban situation. It was generally from among this segment of the French-speaking population that the non-religious elite was drawn. Thus the major factor in the urban experience became the existence of this usually highly successful and influential elite which acted as the leaders of both the city's and the province's French-speaking populations. The elite of Edmonton's community was the most numerous and highly developed of any urban centers' but the elite also existed among the French-speaking populations of several other cities including Calgary, Regina, and Prince Albert.

In the final analysis then, it is obvious that French-speaking people have played an important role not only in the history of Edmonton but also in the history of the whole Alberta-Saskatchewan area. Throughout these lands the French have been present from the earliest days of the fur

trade until the present day. During these years they have made an important contribution to the development of this area, first as fur traders and missionaries and later mainly as agricultural colonists in rural areas and as business and professional men in urban areas. At the same time they have managed, often against seemingly overwhelming odds, to retain some of their identity and rights. In total this is an accomplishment of which the French-speaking residents of Alberta and Saskatchewan today may be proud.

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